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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides resources for teaching about pre-statehood Alaska history and the role of Alaska Native women. The six women leaders featured come from different backgrounds, languages, and cultures. They include an oral historian, a civil rights activist, a bilingual teacher, a traditional storyteller, a healer, and a tradition bearer. The period covered by the lifetimes of these women--from the early 19th century through the present--facilitates consideration of issues ranging back to the first contacts with Russian explorers. Each section contains an introduction to the historical and geographic context in which the women lived and a brief biographical sketch. Supplemental materials include a book chapter in English and Gwich'in on remembrances of subsistence living, a Yup'ik legend, diplomatic letters and other communications, newspaper articles, a language map, and photographs. Each section also contains suggestions for follow-up discussions, activities aimed at increasing multicultural and multilingual awareness, and sources for further reading. (RAH)

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Alaska Native Women Leaders

PRE-STATEHOOD

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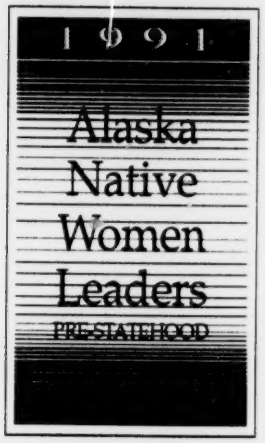

Six Alaskan Native Women Leaders
Pre-Statehood

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Introduction

One goal of celebrating March as "Alaska Women in History Month" is to discover and retell the stories of the women who enrich Alaska. Little has been written or documented on Alaska Native Women pre-statehood.

The biographies of the women in this text were selected to represent individuals from several Alaska Native groups. The ability of these women to lead and achieve in a time in history when barriers to do so were overwhelming, is particularly important to recognize.

This module is designed as a resource book for teachers to utilize, especially during Alaska Womens History Month. The suggested activities offer an opportunity for students to research Alaska history pre-statehood and the role of women.

Any part of this text, and appendices may be copied for classroom and school use.

We are interested to learn how you use this module and will share your ideas with teachers across the state.

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Preface

The six Native Alaskan women featured in this booklet come from six very different backgrounds, languages and cultures. Each is significant in a unique way. **Belle Herbert** witnessed more change in her lifetime near Fort Yukon than many societies have in many centuries. She provides the perspective of a wise elder on the many adaptations that traditional peoples have had to make since European-Americans arrived in Alaska, and provides an appropriate starting point for the series. **Della Keats, Anfesia Shapsnikoff** and **Sophia Vlasoff** managed to develop a creative synthesis between the old culture and the new. **Elizabeth Peratrovich** worked to gain recognition and equality for her people and all Native Alaskans, but her contribution extends to all minorities. **Maggie Lind**, a traditional Yup'ik community figure from Bethel, used her language skills to help people in need and to pass on traditional values through story telling.

Each short biography requires its unique context in order to be appropriately understood and appreciated. Without knowing that there had been several attempts to found a bilingual school, that Sophia Vlasoff had the opportunity to attend one, and was almost certainly bilingual and biliterate herself, one cannot figure out how she herself came to be a bilingual teacher at such an early date. Without some background in the history of multilingualism among Unangan Aleuts, it is not possible to place Anfesia Shapsnikoff into her cultural and historical milieu. Unless one knows the kind of discrimination Native Alaskans faced, and how they had responded to it in the past, one might not fully appreciate the work of Elizabeth Peratrovich. While focusing on the contributions of Native Alaskan Women, these chapters also invite the teacher and class to explore further various themes in Alaskan History, inter-cultural communication and bilingual education.

In the earlier, Russian period, intermarriage between Native women and Siberian men was quite common, and this created a sizeable bilingual population which played an important role in the development of the territory, before and after 1867, when sovereignty of Alaska was transferred to the United States.

The role of various religious denominations is inextricably linked to the histories of many Native Alaskan peoples and cultures as the first bridge between the new and old, traditional and modern, Native and European-American worlds.

Beginning in 1870, for example, it became federal indian policy to entrust the schooling of Native Americans to various Christian denominations. In complete disregard for the first amendment, tax dollars were awarded to various churches for their work in "civilizing" Indians. Federally-funded missionary teachers were often the first white people many Alaskans ever met. It is not surprising that their coming is an important event in the life of 125 year old Belle Herbert, or Della Keats who practiced traditional healing methods while being a Christian.

Belle Herbert

Gwich'in Athabaskan Oral Historian

Records were not kept back in the years when Belle was born, but when she was interviewed for a biographical book in 1980, she could remember events that were known to have occurred in the 1860's and 1870's. Having a memory that clearly recalls what happened over a century ago is reason enough to include Belle Herbert in this series devoted to Native Alaskan women.

Background

The first European explorers might have entered Alaskan waters as early as 1648, when a Siberian crew under the command of Simeon Dezhnev sailed from the Chukchi Peninsula to Anandyr, passing within sight of St. Lawrence Island. Vitus Bering was sent to determine whether or not Alaska and Siberia were joined in the early 1700's, and hundreds of *Promyshlenniki*, Siberian frontiersmen, paddled eastward to the Aleutians in the following decades. Russians and Kamchadal (most Promyshlenniki were Native Siberians) ventured across most of southern Alaska in the next hundred years, and Aleut seamen explored the norther coast, mapping the North Slope in the 1830's. The last area to be visited by White Men might have been the sparsely populated homeland of the Gwich'in (Kutchin) Indians in northwestern Alaska, the birthplace of Belle Herbert.

Belle Herbert

Fort Yukon was established by the British-owned and operated Hudson Bay Company in 1847. As a very young girl, Belle met the first Whites to come to her homeland, and was a young woman when gold was discovered in the neighboring Yukon Territory in 1898. Belle did not witness all the political or economic changes that occurred during her long life, so much as the story that often went unrecorded. As her biographer, Bill Pfisterer wrote, "the daily struggle to survive in a beautiful but harsh environment, where hard work was not an ethic but a necessity in order to eat, stay warm, and live through the long winters in order to enjoy the rebirth of the short summer," is personified in Belle Herbert's story.

Belle lived in and around the present day village of Chalkyitsik, on the Black River, a tributary of the Yukon, the Kwikhpak" (Big River) as the Yup'ik Eskimos and Russians called it. The Gwich'in homeland straddles the Arctic Circle, and distant from all three of Alaska's seacoasts, it does not receive the moderating influence of warming ocean currents. Its winters are longer and colder than most, even by Alaskan standards, and living off the land there requires constant vigilance and activity. Belle Herbert was an important lifelong participant and authority on that traditional, subsistence way of life for an amazing 125 years. She spoke little English, but agreed to share her experience with friends who recorded her stories in Gwich'in and translated them into English. The Alaska Native Language Center in Fairbanks published this collection as *SHANDAA: In My Lifetime*, in 1982. The final chapter is reproduced here in both Gwich'in and English, as Belle Herbert, at the age of 122, told it.

Belle Herbert

Photo courtesy Alaska Native Language Center

Follow Up Activities

Objective: To develop an appreciation for the traditional Alaskan subsistence lifestyle using the autobiography of Belle Herbert.

Procedures: Divide the class into small groups and have each discuss or research the following questions, or use them for a full class activity.

1. Find the Gwich'in homeland on the language map of Alaska. Why was it among the last regions to be visited by European-American explorers or traders? What is the climate and terrain like? What natural resources are available there?

2. How did traditional Gwich'in meet their basic needs, food, clothing and shelter? Richard Nelson's *HUNTERS OF THE NORTHERN FOREST* is an excellent resource for this.

3. Look at the Gwich'in language text. Although written in the Latin ("English") alphabet, it is very different from any Indo-European language, with a completely different grammar and vocabulary. To what extent should the different languages of Alaska be considered precious treasures? To what extent is it important for people to share a common language in a country as large as the USA?

4. Traditional people believed that the spirit world and the physical world are in close relationship, that animals are intelligent creatures with their own language and can communicate with each other, although most human beings can not understand them. This means that hunting or trapping animals is never a matter of outsmarting, tricking or overpowering them. They are only caught because they offer themselves to the hunter. In the Gwich'in region, game was scarce, and people had to move often. Imagine how it was to live such a nomadic way of life. Why would people continue to prefer it to the modern 9-to-5 workday? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living a nomadic way of life?

5. "Bush men" were people who went off to live in un-traditional ways, becoming more like animals. In European folklore, becoming an animal (as in *Beauty and the Beast*, or *The Frog Prince*) is usually considered a curse. In most Native Alaskan stories, it is considered a positive change. Discuss how this difference in belief influences the way you see the wilderness and relate to the animals in it.

6. Belle Herbert was a religious person. The missionaries who introduced Christianity among the Gwich'in invented an alphabet for it and taught the people to read the Bible in their own language. Belle does not give any hint that becoming Christian was a difficult or traumatic change for her or her people. What was the importance of using the local language in the transition from the old ways to the new?

7. Interview an elderly Native Alaskan in your community to learn more about changes that have occurred in her/his lifetime.

Notes and Sources

An autobiography of Belle Herbert was published by the Alaska Native Language Center, at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and the text included here is reprinted from *SHANDAA: In My Lifetime,* with permission from ANLC.

Chapter 26 of *SHANDAA* follows.

Shandaa

by Belle Herbert

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Old Crow gwa'an chan neehihdik t'oonchy'aa.

I've been around Old Crow, too.

Yeendak ts'ąįį chan neehihdik t'oonchy'aa.

I have been up on that side too.

Circle chan neehihdik
yeedi' Teetsii chan tik nineedhishizhii.

I've been around around Circle, too.
I went downriver three times.

Yee'at Fairbanks
aii chan
jyaa dagwąąhchy'aa neegwaal'ya'
jyaa gwizhrii ree.
Fish Camp gwa'an chan
zhyaa ree naraazhrii t'eedaraa'in gwizhrii ree.

There at Fairbanks
too,
I went around there a few times,
that's all.
And around Fish Camp
we hunted and made our living, that's all.

Izhik chan
jyaa gwizhrii.

There,
that's all.

Aiits'a' tr'iinin ihłįį dąį' yi'eenji' yee'at gwitł'it
k'iinji' nidhizhii gwizhrii ree.
Nihky'aa gwintł'oo neehihdik kwaa ts'a' jyaa dihchy'aa.

And then, when I was a child, I went far up to the headwaters
of that river up that way, that's all.
I don't go to very many places, I just stay here.

Aii chan dzan keeshi'ya' kwaa ts'a' zhyaa neehihdik.

I never hunted for muskrats there, I've only been there.

Two times zhat nineedhishizhii gaa chan
k'eiich'ii eenjit gwitr'it t'agwał'in kwaa
shidyąąhch'i' zhrii ree.

I've gone there two times but
I didn't do that kind of work,
only my old man did.

Vizhit tr'iinin googaa chan tr'iinin choo aghwaa aii t'ee zhik vats'ooghai' neegwidii.

Even though I was pregnant, I was packin the other child that I had had before.

[Alice: Even so, she was working.]

Duuyee dinjii yats'a' tr'injii.
Googaa nihk'it
vit'ịį tr'iinin gwintł'oo
itree googaa.

A man wouldn't help a woman.
Even though
the child on her back
really cried a lot.

Akwat ts'a' aii
giheenjyaa neegwigwitł'uk tr'iinin nąįį chan neegitł'uk,
val ch'agahchaa ts'a' łąįį neekwąįį geetak łąįį tik.
Geetak hee łąįį ch'ihłak.
Aii t'ee ni'ęę ree
gwandaii tthak łąįį neekwąįį ee'į'.

Now then,
when they were about to move they bundled everything and dressed the kids
and tied it all to the sled, with two dogs, sometimes three.
Sometimes only one dog.
My mother
had two dogs all her life.

Oo'ok ree tik gwanlịį
geetak hee chan dǫǫ.

Some people had three dogs
and some had four.

Akwat shitseii gwintł'oo tr'injaa nąįį gwitr'it t'agwah'in t'igwinyaa.

Grandchild, the women really worked hard.

Akwat yaaghat
nahan
neeghwaa gwiizhik tr'iinin it'ee diinzhit
shriit'ąhtsii googaa neeghwaa it'ee vigwiinjik nahąą.

Now that one,
your mother,
carried you on her back while she was pregnant
she even kept carrying you around and got hurt that way, you see.

Izhik gwanaa googaa jyaa digwii'in t'oonchy'aa.

Even at that time they were still doing that.

Khik tr'iinin tr'eeghwaa gwizhrii
chy'aa
ninghuk kwaa gwats'an duuyee tr'iinin tr'eeghwaa gwaał'in.
Tr'iinin tr'eeghwaa dąį' chan yaaghat diint'ịį
chan ree zhyaa vak'at ditł'eedii zhit tr'iinin dhidii chan ree an'a'ee chan ree ineekhwaa rahaachak chan ree.

We always packed the kids, that's all
we used to do
but more recently, I haven't seen people packing kids any more.
When we packed the kids there was a thing on our backs
like a chair, and the kids would sit in it facing backwards, and in that way we carried them around.

Łąįį ghwaa haa ree
k'eiich'ii neegahaazhik.

They carried things
in dog packs.

Aaa! shitseii, łyaa gwinzịį gaashandaii kwaa roo.
Dzaa gwizhrii t'ihchy'aa ts'a' nihky'aa łąą neerihiidal kwaa tr'ih zhit
gwizhrii ree.

Ah! grandchild, I really don't know much about it.
I only stayed here and never went out anywhere except with a canoe,
that's all.

Akwat ts'a' nan kak neerihiidal kwaa ts'a'
dzaa gwa'an goo'ąįį t'oonchy'aa.
Juk doonchy'aa gwik'it.

We never traveled around the country and
we just made our home here,
just as it is now.

Akwat ts'a'
it'ee tr'ahadal ts'a' it'ee oondaa nijin neegwiheek'al gwats'a' ree.

But
we would travel around until fall came.

[Alice asked a question.]

Aaa! shitseii gwintł'oo dinjii nihłagogwąhdaii.
Akwat aakin gwilik it'ee deegwąhtł'oo dinjii giyeet'indhan dinjii aakin gwilik roo.

Ah! grandchild, people used to respect each other a lot.
When strangers came around, they showed what affection they had for the people who came.

Akwat zhyaa
oo'at zhat gwizhrii khach'at'oo gadąąh'ai' datthak.

Then
everyone would just crowd around them.

Aaa! shitseii izhik łyaa gaashandaii kwaa.

Ah! grandchild, I really don't know about that.

Khehłan gwizhrii geetak t'iginchy'aa
ts'a' zhik gwizhrii liriidaa ts'a'
łąą khaii hee chan dachąąval haa zhrii roo.

Sometimes they stayed in one place,
and sometimes they moved from place to place
in the wintertime in a toboggan, that's all.

Akwat ts'a'
shih gooheendal gwizhrii hee chan łąji ghwaa t'agąąhchy'aa.
Zhat gwats'a' giheedaa dąi' gwizhrii chan aii gwizhrii łąji ghwaa.
Aii gwiizhik
geedant'ee khwaagahdaa.
Tr'iinin aghwaa googaa ehzhee chan
ch'eeghwaa roo
jyaa'dii'in.
Aaa!

Well,
when they were going to transport some food is the only time they used dog packs.
Only when they were going to go to that place
is the only time for dog packs.
And meanwhile
they too carried packs.
She would be packing a baby, but even so, underneath it
she carried a pack too,
that's how they did.
Oh!

[Alice asked a question.]

Dinjii nilihil'ee t'igwinyaa shitseii.
Izhik dąį' zhyaa diigwiindak googaa oo'ok vadraii t'igwii'in kwaa googaa treediinyaa t'igwinyaa.
Akwat ch'ichį' naatth'ak
kwaa ts'a'
dink'iidhat t'oonchy'aa.

Men respected each other, grandchild.
In those days, when somebody got hurt, even though they had nothing to do with that person, people would still get together and mourn for him.
You didn't hear
about deaths so much then
when I was growing up.

Gohch'it ree hee gwanaa gwats'an ree dinjii nilihk'ii neelee gwats'an ree zhyaa it'ee ree zhyaa dinjii hahłik ts'a'.

Some time ago there were two epidemics, and from that time on, people just started to die off.

Aaa! zhyaa diingwiindak gwinyaa.
Nats'ahts'a' gook'at deegwandak dhak li' zhyaa tthak zhyaa treegaahnyaa.

Ah! people only had accidents back then, it seems.
Somehow they would apparently get the news that someone had been hurt, and they would just cry.

Akwat ch'ichį' ji' gwintł'oo neeshraah-chy'aa adagahaatsyaa.

And when there was a death, they would make themselves suffer a lot.

Aiits'a' aii ginkhii nąįį ch'ichį' k'at tr'igwidii nitsii tr'ahtsii ree khik gwits'eech'ee'yaa, gwits'i'
jyaa dinchy'aa
kwaii haa
gwintł'oo gwitr'it gwaatsii kwaa ts'a' gwigwiłtsąįį t'iginchy'aa.

But then the preachers prevented people from making great mourning over deaths, they prevented
them from doing that
and people
don't do that any more; they can't work very hard at grieving.

Izhik dąį' tr'agwaahk'ik ts'a' kǫ' googaa eeneeriidal gwinyaa.

At that time, they would build a fire and they even went into the fire, it is said.

Aii ree shandaa t'igwii'in kwàa.
Gaa ree shandaa
gwandak
gook'at deedhak hee treediinyaa roo.

I never saw that.
But I did see
when bad news
came to them, how they all cried over it.

Akwat juk t'igwii'in ji' nats'aa hee teegwiheedhat li'.

I wonder how it would be if that happened nowadays.

Gwintł'oo dinjii nikheetsai' t'igwinyaa.

They were very possessive of each other.

[Alice asked a question.]

Akwat
co'ok
naraazhrii
gwiizhik it'ee ree
deegwąhtsii
k'eech'aahkaii, izhik gwanaa chan tr'ikhit gwintł'oo k'eech'araahkaii t'oonchy'aa.

Then
while
they were hunting,
while they did that,
the woman would sew a lot;
in those days people always sewed a lot.

Akwat it'ee googwitr'it gwanlįį akwat ree goodinjii gihiljii dąį' ree
k'eech'araahkaii chan ch'adhaa tr'ahkii.

They had a lot of work to do, and when their men were away
they sewed, and also tanned skins.

Aii kwaii
ts'a'
aaa! shitseii
łąįį k'eerąąhtii.

That too,
and also,
oh, grandchild,
we took care of the dogs.

Łąįį k'eerąąhtii
akwat ts'a'
gook'iitł'it deegwąąhchy'aa deegwąhkhyuk gogwahahthaa gavaa gwiindaii.

We took care of the dogs;
and
we knew how long they were going to be gone.

Akwat ts'a' zhyaa
it'ee k'ineegiheedal ts'a' tr'iilee
givee vikehgahchy'aa it'ee ree.

Akwat ch'agaahkhwąįį ts'a' tr'injaa chan tr'iinin aghwaa googaa chan zhik shih tr'ooheendal
ch'eerinjyaa aii chan tr'injaa jyaa dii'in t'oonchy'aa.

Łąįį ghwaa chan t'aahchy'aa ts'a' tr'iinin aghwaa gwiizhik łąįį ghwaa zhit shih aii
haa łąįį jyaa dah'in.

Aaa! shitseii
łyaa tr'injaa vakąį' vitsi' hiljii dąį'
łyaa gwitr'it t'agwah'in.

Yik'iitl'it gwitr'it gwintsii gwahtsii.
Kheegwiilk'a' ts'a' chan
traa chan kheenjit nizįį daatsii chụụ chan kheenjit nizįį daatsii.

Gwiizhik
k'eech'aahkaii, akwat ch'ahkhii dąį' chan ch'adhaa chan yik'iitl'it
shrilii, jyaa dii'in.

Łąą tr'injaa nąįį neiilii kwaa.

Aaa! shitseii
łyaa zhyaa gwinzįį geegwaldak.
Ben gwandaii dąį' tr'ikhit chan t'inyaa roo.
Shįį ree zhyaa gwinzįį geegwaldak.

[Alice asked a question.]

Izhik ree gwinzįį gaashandaii kwaa izhik ree gwik'it teihgihkhii gashragwąąh-chy'aa kwaa.

It'ee ree
dinjii ree t'adoolnąįį dąį' hee than hee gwats'a' hoiizhii ts'a' juk dzaa deihchy'aa gwik'it gwats'a' gwizhrii roo.
Łąą deegii'in gavaashandaii kwaa.

Duuyee izhik dąį' chan khaihtak ninghuk tr'agwahthaa kwaa t'oonchy'aa.
Khaihtak gwaatsii kwaa zhyaa naraazhrii gwizhrii.

And they just
were going to come back home then so
we had food ready for them.

And when they killed something, a woman, even though she was packing a baby, would go out after the meat,
that woman would go out after it, that's what she did.

She would use a dog pack while she was packing the baby and she put the meat in that dog pack,
that's how she used the dog.

Oh, grandchild!
when the woman's husband was gone
she really worked.

She did a lot of work in his absence.
She kept the fire burning and also
she kept up a large supply of firewood and water.

Meanwhile,
she sewed, and when she was tanning, in his absence,
she prepared the skins, that's what she did.

Women never kept still.

Ah! grandchild,
I just really tell a story right.
When Ben was living he always exaggerated,
but I really tell the story the way it was.

I don't know much about that; I don't like to talk about it when I don't know it well.

Well then,
when I got married I went off there alone just like I am now, that's how it was.
I didn't know what they were doing.

In those days people didn't spend much time visiting.
They didn't visit much, they just hunted, that's all.

Tseedhaa chan keerii'in kwaa.
Jaghaii t'ee vinkeerihee'yaa gǫǫ?
Ch'arookwat ree gaagwiindaii kwaa nats'aa.

Shandaa ree gohch'it ree
tseedhaa keerii'in gwich'in.
Gehnaa ree
chan yeenduk akoo digwii'in gaa ch'adhaa chan
tr'ookwat, tł'il chan tr'ookwat,
aadzii tr'ookwat
dazhoo tr'ookwat
nilįį gąįh chan
ch'aghwaa ghwai' tr'ahtsii.
Aii haa zhrii ch'ookwat zhee chan
ch'ookwat nilįį ginyaa t'inchy'aa.

Akwat aii ree
juunchy'aa
Saturday dąį'
dinjii
tthak ch'ookwat zhee gwats'a'
neegwahaa'yaa aii
nilįį gąįh khwaii kwaii haa
zhyaa giyuukwat kwaa ts'a' goots'an tr'ahtsii.
Izhik yuu gwintł'oo aakin ch'igwiidlįį.

Akwat zhik ch'igii dhaa kwaii ree oo'ok neeshraahchy'aa nąįį giyaak'ąąhtii gwizhrii ree.

Akwat vaanoodlit nąįį k'eiich'i' kwaii yi'eenii tr'igwihilii łyaa gogwantrii roo.

Nats'ahts'a' dzaa gwa'an vigwiheelyaa gǫǫ?
Khwah haa gwitr'it t'agwaa'in t'igwinyaa akwat.

Jyaa doonchy'aa.

Gwintł'oo gwigwiintrii.
K'eiich'ii tsal
yeenihjyaa hijyaa gwaatsii aii tr'ikhit natsal.
Akwat ts'a' dinjii yaajyaa aii kwat
ch'ihłan drin zhrii gwagwadhan akwat dagwąhtsii zhyaa ch'ookwat zhee geenjit gwee'i' nąįį t'arahnyaa.

[Alice asked a question.]

Izhik

We didn't hunt for furs, either.
What would we hunt them for anyway?
We didn't know about buying things.

Finally, during my lifetime,
we started hunting for furs, I think.
Before then
they used to do that upriver, and
someone bought the furs, and they bought babiche,
they bought caribou skins
and caribou skins with the hair on,
and also dried meat
and the grease they made.
Those are the things the traders
bought and then they sold it.

And then
when it was
Saturday
all
the people would
go to the store and
they would buy the meat and grease;
they would trade for it.
It was quite novel and remarkable.

And those poor people out in the woods would just bring caribou calf skins, that's all.

And it was really hard for the white men to bring all that stuff over here.

How could they bring a lot of things here?
They did all that work only with pack sacks.

That's how it was.

It was very hard in those times.
They brought a little,
but they could never bring very much.
They only had enough food in the store for one day's trading, so they say.

At that time

gwanaa t'ee theetryą' tyąh tsal dzaa yeedit Gwichyaa Zhee chan kwaiik'it gwagwąh'e' gwinyaa nahąą.
Aii t'ee dinehnaa hee t'igwii'in.

they had copper pots downriver at Ft. Yukon where they had a settlement, you see.
It was way before we had a store.

Akwat ts'a'
aii gwats'an theetryą' tyąą shriit'ąhtsii dinjii teegąąhchy'aa goodlit ginyaa t'iginchy'aa.
Aii gwiyeendaa nitsii kwaa t'agahnyaa.

And then
from that time on, there came the medium-sized copper pots that everyone had.
They weren't very big, they say.

Aii zhit
shih tsal gaavir.
Kwat ts'a' giichų' zhrii dinii.
Akoo geetak hee chųų gaahłii dǫhłii, chųų k'ąą ree giinii.
Lidii kwaa nats'aa.
Zhyaa yee'ok hee chiits'it neehidik aii, k'it ree t'iginchy'aa roo.

In that
they boiled a little meat
and then they drank the broth.
Maybe sometimes they were thirsty for water, then they drank plain water.
There was no tea.
Just something that's out in the woods, something like that.

Akwat ts'a'
nin tsal keegii'in gaa chan ree
geetak hee oondaa gwagwaahk'ik
joł nihky'aa jidii ch'ok tr'ahtsik aii joł oozhii
aii haa oondaa kǫ' ts'a' giitich'iił'ee.
Jyaa geetak hee t'igwii'in roo.
Aii gwik'it gwizhrii.
Aii t'ee jidii shih kwan nyaa tr'ǫhchy'aa k'it t'inchy'aa aii t'agah'in.
Akoo tr'ohvir k'it t'inchy'aa aii chan gahvir ts'a' giichų' giyaadinii.

And then
they hunted small animals but
sometimes they cooked them over the fire;
they made a stick pointed on the ends, which they called *joł*,
and with that they roasted things over the fire.
Sometimes we did that.
Just like that.
And whatever food they had to live on they just cooked in those ways.
And what they could boil they boiled, and drank the broth.

Googaa gwandaa gwinzįį dinjii gwandaii.
Shitseii akwat zhyaa k'eiich'ii tthak tr'aajyaa nats'aa tr'iits'aa
dinjii tthak ach'agwadhan k'it shaa t'oonchy'aa.

Even so, people lived really well in those days.
Grandchild, now we just eat all kinds of stuff,
and people just die off, that's the way it seems to me.

[Alice asked if she knew anything about the brush man.]

Izhik ree gaashandaii kwaa.

Juk tth'aii hee naa'in gwanlįį gwinyaa roo.

Yeedee Arctic Village gwa'an ree
akwat googaa ree gaashandaii kwaa roo.

Deenaadąį'
datsan gwanlįį
dinjii teech'idlį'.

Aiits'a'
yeenaa tr'injaa
kheedaachik ts'a' tr'al ahak.
Geetak hee dinjii kheedaachik
aii chan tr'al ahak.
Aii an gwii'įį
gwaatsii
aii nąįį nan zhit
t'iginchy'aa, juk tth'aii gwaatth'aa ji' gaa gaagwiindaii kwaa t'oonchy'aa.

It'ee łyaa
dlįh,
dinjii teech'idlį'
ts'a' ch'ihłak kheedaachik aii zhyaa akwat anadąhndak ts'a' nan zhit an gwahtsii izhik t'ee.

Akwat tr'injaa
ch'ihłak chan ree
jyaa diizhik łii chan ree kheedaachii chan ree varagwąh'aii gwinyaa t'oonchy'aa.

Yeedit Venetie
izhik gehdee.

K'ǫǫ łangoo'ee gwa'an hee.

Dinjii yak'at deedhizhii k'iighai' yigwąh'ąįį gwinyaa t'oonchy'aa.

Aiits'a' dinjii t'inyaa łii ree gwinyaa.

Dinjii k'eegwiichy'aa gwatsal gaa kheedaachii aii zhyaa than adanąhndak aii eegiginkhii t'iginyaa.

[Alice asked if she ever saw one.]

Łąą ree nakwaa,
nats'aa gwik'iighai' naa'in haał'yaa.

I don't know about that.

They say today there's still some brush men!

Up there around Arctic Village;
but I really don't know about it.

In the old days
there was famine
and people would freeze to death.

Well then,
long ago a woman
would survive and go into the brush.
Sometimes a man would survive
and he too would go into the brush.
They had dens
that they made for themselves
and those people
lived in the ground; maybe it's still that way today, but we don't know about it.

And really,
death,
people would freeze to death;
but one man would take off and make himself a hole in the ground and stay in it.

Or one
woman perhaps
would do that, I guess; she took off and then somebody would find her, so it's said.

There at Venetie,
above there.

There are a lot of creeks around there.

A man came upon her there and found her, so they say.

And so the man told about it, they say.

And so those people that almost died but survived and lived alone by themselves, are the ones they talk about.

No, indeed,
how would I ever see a brush man!

Gwinyaa gwizhrii tr'igwiitth'ak.

We just hear about it, that's all.

Bella ree naa'in nąh'yą'
aii ree vakwaa.
Franįcis vitr'injaa.

Bella saw a brush man,
but she died.
Francis's wife.

Shitseii aii t'ee yeenjit Kheetsik gwigwich'ii chy'aa gwinįhjyaa
ts'ąįį nagaazhrii dǫhłii.

Grandchild, they were living up at Kheetsik and were coming down
and hunting too, maybe.

Aiits'a' giihaa dǫhłii
gwiindhaa ts'a' nihky'aa zheegwadhaa t'inchy'aa dǫhłii.

And then I guess they were camping,
and as it was warm, they had the tent flap open.

Aiits'a' ree
yeedit k'ii'ee tąįh tr'uu niin'ee dǫhłii.

And then
there was this brushy hill with a bare top.

Akwat ts'a'
tr'ineedhat dǫhłii.

And right then
she woke up, I guess.

Aiits'a' ree
oonin tąįh kak gwąąh'in ts'a' t'inchy'aa
akwat ree izhik k'iinin gwąąh'in dǫhłii.

And then
she saw something opposite her on the exposed gravel hill,
she saw something right over there opposite her.

Zhik k'iinaa zhyaa ree dinjii tr'iinzhii.

Ah
aiits'a' ree zhat k'aii tsal gwanandaa'ee
aii tthat naa'ąį' tąįh tr'uu kak zhyaa
ree naadii.

And there was a man, coming toward her!

Ah,
and there where little willows grew,
right there he passed and sat down on
the gravel hill.

Gwiizhik t'ee Francis dak ahnyaa łii.

Akwat ts'a'
zhyaa ree nigiyul'in dǫhłii.
Ninehjin ts'a' ree ndak ts'a' k'eegwaanąįį
yahnyaa
shaagwaandak.

Jyaa gwizhrii ree.

Łyaa t'igwinyaa gwich'in shitseii
oo'ok ch'eekwaii nąįį t'agahnyaa
ch'eekwaii nąįį yee'at ddhah tee
k'ii'an t'eedaroo'ya' ilii ehjyaa nahgǫǫ
ginyaa izhik t'eedagaa'in aii t'ahnyaa
dǫhłii.

Akwat t'ee naa'in nah'yą' gwinzįį shaa-
gwaandak vaagwandak.

Meanwhile, she woke Francis up.

And then
they both waited for him, I guess.
He stood up and then he disappeared again,
she said about him,
as she told me.

That's all.

I think it's true, grandchild,
and they're talking about Eskimos out there
for there are Eskimos up that way among
the mountains;
but it's said to be a good place to hunt,
and it's not very far to where they live,
so perhaps it's them they're talking about.

So that is the story she told me about the
brush man—you tell him good.

[Alice asked if people were religious long ago even though there was no priest.]

Ginkhii kwaa izhik
dinjii gwik'injiji nąįį
łyaa ninghit dąį'
hee gwats'at ginkhii goodlit gwinyaa googaa
ti'haa
dinjii
ginjii eedagoodąąhtan haa gwitr'it
gwintsii deegwiiltsąįį gwiizhik t'ee
gwi'ik gwiizhi' t'oonchy'aa.

There was no priest there,
but there were religious people
long ago;
since then the priests came, they say, but
really
people
studied the word and they worked very
hard on it and by and by they began
to understand it.

Aii dęhtły'aa chan gwanlįį kwaa roo.

There were not even any books at that time.

Ginkhii dyąąhch'i'
aii dęhtły'aa aghan ts'a'
jeiinchy'aa geeshinyaahchii gwinyaa,
k'iighai' gwee'an dęhtły'aa gwanlįį
gwinyaa t'oonchy'aa.

The Old Man preacher
made those books and
they say he made books until he was very
old, and that's why there are books
around here.

Ndaa ts'a' chan
dęhtły'aa neeheekwaa hagaa gwinyaa
t'oonchy'aa.

And later on
they say there won't be any more of those
books.

Shitseii
dinjii łyaa
gwintł'oo gǫǫltin.

Grandchild,
people were really
taught a lot.

Khik zhyaa ree tr'igijiinjii gwizhrii ree.

We always pray, that's all.

Drin zhit hee chan neekwąįį
datthak gwideetik chan.

Twice on Sunday, and every day in
between too.

Aaa! shitseii, heedąį' ninghit kwaa gwanaa
shigii t'ee ch'anjaa ilįį gwiizhik it'ee
ch'ijuk
nagwaatth'at
ts'a' ndaa łigweedhaa ts'a' nji' nji'
gwatth'aa k'it t'oonchy'aa juk.

Ah, grandchild, a few years back
when my son was getting older, then
everything
changed
and it keeps getting worse and worse; it's
like that now.

Gwik'it chan łąą ch'ichį' chan t'ii'in.

The deaths are like that, too.

Ndaa ts'a' zhyaa diintehraahk'ee
k'it t'igwihee'yaa.

Maybe later on people will just kill us
off with guns,
it'll be like that.

Kwat ts'a'
chan
niłarahaak'ee ts'a'
gwinzįį gwintł'eegwada'aii gwahtsii k'it
t'iihęę'yaa gwinyaa t'oonchy'aa.

And then
too
people will shoot each other and
think they're doing a really good thing; they
say it'll be that way.

Aii gwik'it juk gweedhaa.

That's the way it is today.

Łyaa dinjii gwik'injighit niighit dąį' gwats'an hee
K'eegwaadhat gwinyaa gwik'it
gaandaii nąįį
gwanlįį t'oonchy'aa.

But some people still believe as they did a long time ago,
like the Lord, it is said;
there are people living
in that way.

[Alice asked if she could read Dagǫǫ.]

Akwaa
ninghit dąį' gwats'an hee
nitsii vakwaa gwats'a' ninghit kwaa oodit tr'iginkhii zhee
David
ginkhii tr'ihiłtsąįį oonduk outside hee neerahahchik
aii vik'iitł'uu tr'iginkhii gwałtsii.

No;
a long time ago
just before your grandfather died, up there in the church
David
was going to become a preacher and they took him Outside
and while he was gone I substituted for the preacher.

Nitsii shits'i' vakwaa gwats'an.

That was after your grandfather died.

Akwat dzaa gwizhit chan datthak shee nihdeegiidal Bible eegavaałtan.

Everyone came into my house and I taught them the Bible.

Akhai'
shaagweech'in kwaa goodlit.

And then
I lost my eyesight.

Shaagweech'in kwaa ts'a'
zhyaa ree jyaa dihchy'aa shiłtsąįį ts'a' jyaa dihchy'aa.

I lost my eyesight and
it made me like this, as I am now.

Kwat łąą noł'ya' ts'a' t'oonchy'aa kwaa.

There's no way I can see it now.

Aii khaii McDonald nał'yą' t'arahnyaa.

That winter I saw McDonald.

Jyaa dinchy'aa dzaa dagwat deetak nashahthat gaa dzaa viki' ehdak tr'i-kyaał'ee roo.

He let me stand between his knees, and when he was sitting, I was taller than his head.

Kwaa roo.

No, indeed.

Aii gwiizhik nał'yą' t'ee.

That's when I saw him.

Chy'aa
nishinshihiłchįį gwiizhik at'ǫohju' hee vakwaa.

And long ago,
when I was getting older, that's when he died.

Yeenihjyaa ts'ąįį vitr'injaa k'iinii needyaa łii ree.

Over on the other side, when his wife was coming back,
I saw her.

Nał'yą' roo.

Li'haa
ginkhii dyąąhch'i'
gwitr'it gwiłtsąįį.

Really,
the preacher Old Man
worked hard.

Yaa nitsii viti' chan
yeenjit Teetł'it
yeenjit
Eagle
Teetsii gwidi' haa tthak geech'ooltin
t'arahnyaa.

Yaa nitsii viti'
aii gwik'it aii ginkhii dyąąhch'i'
aii haa.

Aii shitsii ginkhii aii yeenji' ts'ąjį hee
gwiginkhii niljį.

Jyaa gwizhrii ree.

Now your grandfather's father also,
up at Teetł'it,
upriver
at Eagle
and downriver at Teetsii, he taught at
all those places.

That's your grandfather's father;
he was like that with the preacher Old Man
with him.

And my grandfather was a preacher up-
river;
he was their preacher there.

And that's all.

Della Keats

Inupiaq Eskimo Traditional Healer

Della Keats, an Inupiaq Eskimo traditional healer, was born about 1907, near Kotzebue. She was always interested in medicine, in healing people, and while she learned a lot of traditional techniques from her parents, she beganhealing people at the age of 16, about 1923. She never used any instruments, nor did she perform any surgery. She always insisted that when she could not cure the patient, they go to the hospital, consult with modern physicians. Her only healing talent lay in her hands.

Background

In times before European/American medicine was available in Alaska, Native Alaskans had numerous traditional cures for various illnesses. Disease was often considered to be the result of spiritual imbalance, and for serious cases, the traditional healer was the shaman.

In ancient times, Native Alaskans believed, there had been communication between the spirit world and human beings, and between the animals and human beings as well. But people had somehow lost their ability to understand what the animals were saying, and could no longer communicate with the spiritual world either. The shaman, however, was a person, a man or woman, whom, it was believed had recaptured this lost ability to speak to and understand the spirits. Because of this, he or she could deal effectively with the. when something was wrong, when they had been offended, when something was out of balance. Most shamans had some kind of ceremony they enacted, usually with singing and drumming, in order to perform their prophetic or healing work. But we know there were shamans who did not use any particular equipment, nor did they perform any particular rites. Some teachers and missionaries took a very negative view of shamans, others did not. Russian Orthodox missionaries met some shamans in the early 1800's, and encouraged them to continue healing people.

.n later years, especially after 1880, American officials discouraged and even persecuted shamans. In Southeast Alaska, where Tlingit shamans did not wash or cut their hair, government authorities had shamans' heads scrubbed, their hair cut. The practice of shamanism became a crime, for which Native healers could be imprisoned. Still, many Native Alaskans continued to rely on the wisdom of past centuries, and applied healing knowledge and techniques in their own lives.

Della Keats

Della did use some ancient Inupiaq methods in her work. For example, she once saw her mother stitch a deep cut shut with a needle, disinfected by pouring hot water over it, and a human hair. She remembered traditional treatment for burns and frostbite, and she had the advantage of once having studied a human anatomy book, when she was in seventh and eighth grade.

Della never took any money for healing anyone, saying, "I don't need money. I never

eat money yet." But she was so successful at diagnosing and curing people, that medical professionals were amazed.

Della saw no contradiction between her healing work and her devout Christian faith. Unlike some government officials and missionaries of the past, she saw the two as complimentary, and she never hesitated to use modern medicine when she could not treat a patient. Both the traditional, the ancient and old, and the modern, innovative and new, needed to be embraced, incorporated into the Alaskan way of life.

Della Keats *Photo by Sabra K. McCracken*

Della believed everyone should continually pass on whatever knowledge they had to others. She was called "the Teaching Doctor" by one of her students, who wrote about her in *Alaska* magazine in 1985. She offered a course in the Alaska Native Studies Department at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, ANS 401, entitled "Knowledge of Alaskan Elders." Later the University awarded her an honorary doctoral degree, making her "Dr. Della Keats, Ph.D." in 1985.

The University of Alaska named its Summer Institute in Health Careers after Della Keats, who died in 1989, at the age of 82. Through her lifetime of work and the continuing summer institute, Della Keats, the traditional Inupiaq doctor, lives on. The lives of the many patients she cured, the many students she taught, were touched with the lightness and brightness of her healing hands and loving heart.

Here are some of Dr. Della Keats' own words:

"Don't waste your body. Keep it clean and full of joy."

"Be good to your brothers and sisters. Be kind to them."

"Be proud we have parents, 'cause they teach us how to make a living. Don't get mad and run away from them, even if they give you a hard time. Children should obey their parents. Disobedience makes a child's life hard."

"Be good to orphans and good to old people."

"When we do bad things, its hard for us. We have to be happy...happy all the time. Don't worry too much. Worriness is a bad sickness. It's not good for the body..."

One student summarized Della's course this way: "Della Keats believes that laughter helps heal the body. Few who know her would dispute the theory."

Follow Up Activities

Objective: To develop an appreciation for the traditional knowledge and competence of Native Alaskan elders.

Procedures: Use the following questions for small group activity or class discussion.

1. Modern Western medical science has developed many ways of treating sickness, including various medicines, drugs and surgery. Traditional Native medicine utilized plants and herbs as drugs, practical, common sense cures for injuries, and invocation of spiritual powers. What does recognition by the University of Alaska mean for the relationship between these two approaches?

2. Della considered the human being a single whole, a total person, whose moods and emotions directly effected one's physical well being. How does this compare with modern theories of psychiatry and mental health?

3. View one of the video tapes produced of Della Keats interacting with patients. How does her style, her technique differ from other doctors you have known?

4. What characteristics of Della's own personality were important in her approach to her work, her patients, her life?

5. Where in Alaska can you learn various methods of healing?

6. Research other women healers in the United States.

7. What methods of treatment and healing would Della Keats use for alcohol and drug abuse?

Notes and Sources

Further information about Della Keats and her work is available from Maniilaq Health Corporation, Kotzebue, and the Della Keats Health Program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Two articles featuring Della Keats appeared in *Alaska* magazine, in December 1985. The Alaska State Department of Education has a short 3/4" format video tape showing Della Keats practicing her healing techniques.

A listing of traditional Inupiaq values follows.

Inupiat Ilitqusiat

Every Inupiaq is responsible to all other inupiat for the survival of our cultural spirit, and the values and traditions through which it survives. Through our extended family, we retain, teach, and live our Inupiaq way.

With guidance and support from Elders, we must teach our children Inupiaq values:

Knowledge and Language Sharing
Respect for Others
Cooperation
Respect for Elders
Love for Children
Hard Work
Knowledge of Family Tree
Avoidance of Conflict
Respect for Nature
Spirituality
Humor
Family Roles
Hunter Success
Domestic Skills
Humility
Responsibility to Tribe

Our understanding of our universe and our place in it is a belief in God and a respect for all his creations.

Maggie Lind

Yup'ik Eskimo Traditional Storyteller

Maggie Lind *Photo courtesy John J. Active*

Maggie Lind was born on December 18, 1901 in Bethel, and lived in the Moravian Children's Home there from the time she was eight years old. At the age of seventeen she married her first husband who died about twelve years later. In 1936, she married her second husband Adolph Lind, a German-American, operated a trading post. She was devoted to serving the Yup'ik Eskimo people, especially as an interpreter at the regional hospital. She often invited out patients from various neighboring villages to stay at her house, making sure they faithfully followed the doctor's instructions and took their medications at the appointed time. In fact, her home was open to anyone who needed a cup of tea, a warm meal, a place to spend the night.

"I am an old time Eskimo," she once said in a KYUK-TV interview, "and ever since I was twelve years old I've been interpreting for the nurses and doctors, and they never gave me even one stick of gum for my work. I do it because I love my Eskimos, my own people, you know...I want my people to be like that. Try to help one another, even if we don't have to be paid all the time, you know."

Her contribution to the cultural and social life of the Kuskokwim Delta however, derived primarily from her talent as a traditional storyteller.

Storytelling was the basic format in which the young were introduced to the basic ideals and values of any traditional culture. The Sacred Stories about the origins of the People, the structures of the world, the proper relationship between human beings and the earth, the water, the birds, fish and land animals, as well as the spirits could only be transmitted to the next generation orally, in face-to-face encounters with elders who knew the stories well. Of course, in any given tribe, nearly everyone knew the gist of the important stories, but in each generation there were those few, especially talented elders who could tell them well, perform them well. Maggie Lind was such an elder. For the last forty years of her life, she devoted her energy to perpetuating the rich oral literature of the Yup'ik Eskimo peoples of the Kuskokwim-Yukon Delta in Southwestern Alaska.

Maggie used storytelling to construct a bridge between her own traditional culture and

the new English-speaking world about which she learned at school. She believed it was important for everyone to value their own ethnic heritage and background and, at the same time, learn as much as they could in order to adapt successfully to a changing world.

Most of this legacy would have been lost, except for the fact that some years after Statehood, KYUK public radio was established in Bethel. Some of the stories that Maggie Lind told so well, in both English and Yup'ik, were recorded, so that future generations could enjoy them, in the same way that many older generations had appreciated Maggie's gift.

Maggie Lind died on September 13, 1976, but she is not forgotten: At commencement on May 4, 1979, at the Bethel campus of the University of Alaska, the grateful people of the Kuskokwim-Yukon Delta dedicated the main building to her memory.

A traditional Yup'ik legend, as told in English by Maggie Lind, follows.

How the Crane Got His Blue Eyes

This story is a Yup'ik style combination, similar to some of Aesop's fables. It has elements that recall "The Boy Who called Wolf," as well as the form, "How the X got its Y." It also warns that your eyes can play tricks on you! [ed.]

One time a crane was flying along looking for food. Tuai-llu [and then] he come to a tundra with lots of berries. Tuai-llu, he landed. He see a big stump.

He took his eyes off and put them on the stump.

"I'm going to go eat some berries. If somebody come along, you must call me."

Tuai-llu, he went back to the tundra. He was eating berries and his eyes started calling.

"Master! Master! Somebody's coming and they're going to take us away!"

Tuai-llu, he went down, put his eyes on. It was only a drifting log, floating down the river.

"Now don't ever tell me [a] lie again. Next time I won't come down if [when] you call me."

He put them on the stump and went back [to] eat more berries.

After while, (they did not know clock[s] in those days—maybe twenty minutes or fifteen minutes afterwards...)

"Master! Master, somebody's coming...and they're taking me away!" And they sound further and further away.

He run down and look for his eyes. No eyes.

"Gee, what will I do with no eyes? I can not see where I'm going!" (But, [you ask] how could he eat berries when he had no eyes? He was just feeling around on the tundra.)

He went back, felt around and found two berries. He put them on. Everything was too red. These were cranberries.

"Oh, these will never do! I will never know if its daylight or night. It will always be red."

Tuai, he took them and threw them away. He felt around for two more and put them on. Everything was just black.

"Oh, this would never do. I'd never see the sun."

Tuai-llu, he took his eyes off and threw them away and he looked for some more. He found nice soft berries and he put them on. Everything was nice and blue.

"Oh boy! What good eyes I have! Now I can see daylight and night and everything else will be light blue" (like the color of my qaspeq) [traditional hooded summer dress]. So after he had all he wanted to eat, he was going home. While he was going home, he saw his girlfriend coming to meet him, and she noticed his eyes, and she said,

"Oh Mr. Crane! You got good, nice blue eyes!" And she was so glad, she ran to him and sang:

"Beautiful, Beautiful Blue Eyes! I'll never love black eyes again!"

And, I guess they lived happily ever after. And now if you catch a crane you open the eyes, and if they are blue, the [inaudible] will be too. Aaaaa.

Follow Up Activities

Objective: To develop an appreciation for the traditional storytelling and Native Alaskan humor.

Procedures: Divide the class into small discussion grups or talk about these questions with the entire class.

1. Maggie Lind enjoyed performing Yup'ik stories. In the centuries before written language, information could only be passed down by the spoken word. European-American culture values the written word, believing that if words are written, documents signed, there is proof that these words were communicated, verified, authenticated. Written words have an apparent permanence that spoken words do not seem to have. Is information in print always true or more accurate? What are the advantages and disadvantages of communicating (and teaching) using written instead of spoken language?

2. When it is available, listen to the recording of Maggie Lind telling the Crane legend. Native Alaskans take a different view of spoken language. Traditionally it was the spoken word that was permanent, because once a word is spoken, it can never be taken back. As one elder said, "It goes off to the ends of the universe, while your printed words can be torn up, burned, destroyed, as if they never happened." Do you think Maggie's stories should be published? Or is it better to hear her voice? Would it better to have movies of video tapes, so we could see her? Is there any substitute for a "live performance?"

3. People read books silently, privately, individually. Storytellers tell their tales to audiences, with several people listening and reacting to the story at the same time. Reading isolates people from each other, storytelling usually brings them together in larger groups. Does this help explain why some Native Alaskan groups have not been eager to write their stories down or publish them in English?

4. Maggie Lind knew how to read Yup'ik but chose to continue telling stories instead of writing them down. What would have been lost if she had decided to publish these stories instead of telling them over and over again? She seems to have believed, like Della Keats, that laughter is good for a person's well being. What do you think?

5. Interview a storyteller in your community. Invite her/him to class.

Notes and Sources

KYUK Public Radio/TV in Bethel produced a documentary on Maggie Lind when the Maggie Lind building was dedicated in 1979. She is pictured in *Harmonious to Dwell*, a history of Bethel, edited by Rev. Kurt Vitt, published during the city's centennial and still in print.

An audio-cassette of Maggie Lind telling the story included in this chapter is available from the Department of Education.

Elizabeth Wanamaker Peratrovich

Tlingit Indian Civil Rights Activist

Most people remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as the great leader of the civil rights movement in the Lower 48 during the 1960's. The struggle for racial equality and equal treatment under law, open housing and equal opportunity in schools and in the workplace, however, began in Alaska many years earlier. The leader in the campaign for equal rights for Native Alaskans was a Tlingit woman, Elizabeth W. Peratrovich.

Background

In the Russian era, Natives who worked for the Russian America Company, many of whom could read and write two or more languages, and who often held positions of responsibility within the middle and upper management of the corporation, were considered citizens. When the treaty, transferring sovereignty of Alaska to the United States was written, it guaranteed citizenship for the "civilized tribes," and said that the other Alaskans would be subject to whatever laws the US Congress would enact concerning them. Unfortunately for Native Alaskans, "civilized" was not defined in the treaty, and even those Natives who had enjoyed citizenship in the Russian Empire were denied American citizenship, even when they petitioned for it or sued in federal court to obtain it. Even when American authorities unofficially defined the criteria for citizenship as Christian religious faith and fluency in the English language, Natives failed to qualify.

Alaskan schools and many businesses were segregated, and the courts were not ready, it seems, to change this. In 1905, for example, an Aleut girl living at Sitka wanted to attend the American public school because of its music program. Coming from a bilingual Christian family, with an American father named Jones, she asked the judge to declare her an American citizen, entitled to attend the school reserved for Anglo-Americans. The judge, however, denied that she was a citizen, since she was not sufficiently "civilized." Since Miss Jones went to fish camp every summer with her Aleut grandmother, she was not civilized, and therefore not a citizen, and could not attend the public school.

Even earlier, in 1898, when Tlingit and Aleut residents of Sitka felt that their rights were being violated, they petitioned both the Russian Ambassador in Washington, DC, and the President of the United States. They wrote their appeals in Russian and English, and signed their names using the Cyrllic "Russian" alphabet. But their protests had little impact.

The Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood were founded in 1912 and 1915 to campaign for citizenship and equality for Native Alaskan. When the US Congress granted American citizenship to all Native Americans in 1924, the first part of this battle ended, but equality was still far away. Signs in businesses and stores told Native Alaskans they were not welcome. "No Natives Allowed," "We cater to White Trade only," "No Native Trade Solicited," and even" "No Dogs, No Natives," were the kinds of signs displayed in some windows in the territory. Natives could not buy homes in certain parts of town, could not be served in certain restaurants, could not attend certain schools. They were treated much the same way Blacks were in the South.

Elizabeth Peratrovich

Elizabeth Peratrovich *Photo courtesy AK State Library*

Elizabeth Wanamaker was the adopted daughter of Andrew and Mary Wanamaker, Presbyterian church leaders living in Angoon. Well educated, and articulate in English, Elizabeth was a strikingly beautiful woman, elegant and self assured, charming and soft-spoken. She was, in many ways, the personification of the ideals for which the ANB/ANS had been founded.

When she and her husband Roy Peratrovich moved to Juneau as adults, they discovered they could not buy a home in the part of town where they wanted to live. Natives weren't welcome there. Active in the Alaska Native Sisterhood, Elizabeth became Grand President and lobbied tirelessly for the passage of the Alaska Territory's Anti-Discrimination Act. In 1943 and 1944, it failed to pass the legislature, but in 1945, it passed the House by a wide margin. The debate in the Senate, with only 16 members, was heated, and the vote was expected to be very close.

Elizabeth attended all the hearings and sessions, quietly listening, often knitting as she did. It was Senator Edward Anderson of Nome who introduced the bill to the Senate, and Senator Allen Shattuck of Juneau who opposed it most vehemently, saying at one point,

> "Far from being brought closer together, which will result from this bill, the races should be kept further apart. Who are these people, barely out of savagery, who want to associate with us whites with 5,000 years of recorded civilization behind us?"

Quietly, from the gallery, Elizabeth Peratrovich rose to respond:

> "I would not have expected that I, who am barely out of savagery, would have to remind the gentleman with 5,000 years of recorded civilization behind them, of the Bill of Rights."

There was applause from the gallery. The Bill passed the Senate 11-5, and Governor Ernest Gruening signed the measure on February 16, 1945.

Elizabeth once said that there were three kinds of people who practice discrimination:
"First, the politician who wants to maintain an inferior minority group so that he can always promise them something; second the Mr. and Mrs. Jones, who aren't quite sure of their social position and who are nice to you on one occasion and can't see you on others, depending on whom they are with; and third, the great superman, who believes in the superiority of the white race."

Elizabeth died of cancer, December 1, 1958, and never knew that a grateful state would set aside a day to remember her.

It was not until many years later that Elizabeth's efforts to secure equality for all Alaskans won recognition. In 1987, the State legislature established the annual "Elizabeth Peratrovich Day" February 16, the anniversary of the signing of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Born on the Fourth of July, 1911, her birthday was already a national holiday. So every year, Alaskans pause to remember her, dedicating ourselves to continuing her efforts, every February 16, to achieving equality and justice for all Alaskans of every race, creed, and ethnic background.

Elizabeth and her husband Roy, who died a few weeks before the first Elizabeth Peratrovich Day, raised two sons, Frank and Roy Jr., and a daughter, Loretta (Montgomery) who lives in the state of Washington today. Her children speak affectionately and respectfully of their mother who, they say, tried to shield them from the discrimination she was opposing with such effectiveness most of her adult life.

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE: To increase student awareness of the discrimination to which Native Alaskans were and sometimes are subjected and the struggle to change Alaskan society and eliminate this discrimination.

PROCEDURES: Discuss the following questions with the class or divide into small groups.

1. Native Alaskans encountered many obstacles in their struggle to be accepted as citizens of the United States. Read the petitions of the Aleut and Tlingit citizens of Sitka to the Russian Ambassador and the Federal Government, and the letter of Bishop Nicolai to President McKinley. What can students discern about the condition of "civilized tribes" at this time?

2. The founding of the Alaska Native Brotherhood in 1912, and the Alaska Native Sisterhood in 1915, are discussed in the text book *ALASKA NATIVE LAND CLAIMS*. Students may be interested in researching more about the past and present activities of the ANB/ANS, interviewing present day members or officers.

3. The Peratrovich's were in continuous contact with Alaska's delegate in Washington, DC, and with the Territorial Governor. Some of the correspondence is included in the appendix here. Students might be interested in investigating the lobbying campaign in greater detail.

4. Read the text of the 1945 Anti-Discrimination Act. What do these tell you about the kinds of prejudice to which Native Alaskans were subjected before these bills passed? Consider the restaurant sign pictured in the photograph of downtown Juneau, also in the appendix.

5. Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich both labored many years to secure equal rights for Native Alaskans, but their contributions went unrecognized for many years. Read the newspaper account of the campaign to establish "Elizabeth Peratrovich Day" and the bill establishing it, signed by Governor Cowper in 1989. Is Elizabeth Peratrovich Day observed in your community? Why or why not?

RESOURCES AND NOTES

Tundra Times (June 20, 1988) reported on the establishment of Elizabeth Peratrovich Day, and features of photography of her with Gov. Gruening at the signing of the Anti-Discrimination Act in 1945. Sealaska Heritage Foundation in Juneau has compiled a substantial file, documenting her life and accomplishments.

Copies of letters and petitions relating to this chapter, and the 1989 ceremony establishing Elizabeth Peratrovich Day follow.

PETITION FROM THE ORTHODOX RESIDENTS OF SITKA
TO THE IMPERIAL RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR AT
WASHINGTON, DC, VON KOTZEBUE, 1897

Your Excellency.

We all, the undersigned Orthodox residents of Sitka, as well of Russian descent as of native races, take the liberty of addressing you, with the entreaty that you may extend your protection to the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, and defend it against oppression and violence of all sorts which it suffers at the hands of the Presbyterian missionaries and other persons, not unfrequently even at those of Government officials belonging to the Presbyterian Church.

The Orthodox natives, Indians, numbering no less than 482, are continually subjected to vexations of every description. Nor can they obtain redress in the courts and other official places, where Presbyterian influences reign supreme.

Cases are not unfrequent when Government officers, belonging to the Presbyterian denomination, themselves violate the rights of the Orthodox by their interference. Such a case occured on the 22-d of January of the current year, 1897, when, with the personal participation of the Governor Mr. James Sheakly and the Marshal, Mr. W. Williams, violence was done to an Orthodox Tayon (chief), Katlan, who was compelled to have his wife buried in two coffins, while the rector of the Orthodox church, because he protested against official interference in a purely ecclesiastical matter, was called a "bad man" by the Governor and other insulting names. This case will probably be immediately reported to your Excellency by His Eminence, the Right Reverend Nicholas, Bishop of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands.

Not a year passes but tidings of similar and even worse outrages are received from remote Alaska.

In the near future Sitka expects a new Governor in the person of the Presbyterian minister I. G. Brady and a new Marshal, in that of W. A. Kelly, former Superintendent of the Presbyterian Mission. With the entrance of these men into office, Orthodoxy expects an increase of persecution.

In view of all these facts we take the boldness to petition your Excellency:

1) To have recourse to the Government at Washington, to represent to it the condition of Orthodoxy in Alaska, and request it to impress on the officers it sends out to Alaska the duty of keeping a watchful eye on the abuses of the Presbyterian Mission, and preserving an impartial attitude towards Orthodoxy, in strict observance of the provisions of the treaty concluded with the United States in 1867, and particularly not to allow themselves to subject the members of the Orthodox community to annoyances and vexations, which might occasion riots.

2) To intercede with His Imperial Majesty the Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovitch, Autocrat of all the Russians, that He may appoint a representative of the Russian Imperial Government in Alaska, to reside in Sitka—to whom Russian subjects residing here, as well as all Orthodox inhabitants of Alaska, may have recourse when they suffer vexations in matters pertaining to religion and in the not unfrequent cases when other provisions of the above named treaty are violated.

Whereto we affix our signatures:

A. Startsev, G. Sokoloff, I. Linguist, Stephan Chernoff, John Zearanoff, Ilia Renkin, John Miller, F. Ivanoff, Platon Larionov, Luka Petelin, Ivan Dal'strem, Kondratii Zyrianov, Matfei Shmakov, Elia Seminoff, Kharlampii S. Sokolov, Maria D. Sokolova, Petr Chernov, Vasilii Shergin, Katerina Shergin, Elicei Simonov, Nastasia Shmakova, V. Panamaroff, Jacob Panamaroff, Mrs. R. Alberstone, Mrs. M. Chichenoff, Mrs. P. Larionoff, Mrs. P. L. Hope, Mrs. L. Patelin, Mrs. N. Panamaroff, P. Romanoff, Mrs. Mary Chechenoff, Mrs. D. Chechenoff, Mrs. J. Chechenoff, Mrs. A. Chechenoff, William Hantan, Mrs. R. Patanroff, Miss A. Albertstone, Miss Z. Albertstone, Mrs. Mary Larionoff, Iulia Maret, Mrs. J. Maller, Vasilii Kashevarov, Anna Shmakova, Alexandr Shmakov, Andrei Shmakov, Ekaterina Gel'shtedt, Pelageya Ponomareva, Evgenia Malakhova, Ekaterina Trainer, Alexandr Bourdukovskii, Marfa Bourdukovskaya, Theodor Kashevarov, Ekaterina Kashevarova, E. K. Balshanin, A. Shishkin, Mrs. A. Tagg, Mrs. H. McBride, Mrs. P. Morgen, Aleck Eline, Tatiana Zyrianova, Maria Bourdukovskaya, Alexandra E. Sokolova, Elizaveta Prosheva, Anisiya Ivanova, Innokentii German, Matfei Shmakov, E. Staruyeva, Petr Staruyev, Mrs. H. U. Marshall, Fil. Gavr. Kashevarov, Iv. S. Kaznakov.

PETITION FROM TLINGIT ORTHODOX CHIEFS
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, 1897

Sir

From the very time that the United States raised her flag here and in the whole Territory, our people represented by their chief's prominent members, have not ceased to address themselves direct to the Government at Washington, while knowing the fact that the Government is represented here by the Governor and other officials. The reason of this is following, because here we cannot get any satisfaction to our just and lawful demands. We know that the Russian Government at the time of the transfer of Alaska to the U.S. did not sell us as slaves to America, but left us some rights and privileges which were later made lawful and firm by the U.S. Congress. The Organic act, providing a civil Government for Alaska in section 8 provides that the Indians or other persons in said district shall not be disturbed in the possession of any lands actually in their use or occupation or now claimed by them. On the strength of this law we always understood that every Indian has a right to dispose of his own life and liberty and his own property whether it consists in personal possessions or real estate for instance: lands, forests, lagoons, some small bay and rivers in which we could procure for ourselves the necessary food and other things for existence.

We always thought and surmised that the civil Government sent out from Washington would punish criminals equally whether white or native, if a white man spills the blood of an Indian or an Indian spills the blood of a white man, the justice would mete out equal punishment. But in reality this equality was never practised. It is true that the first four years of the protection of the American Eagle remain in our minds clear and unsullied cloud of the misunderstanding between a white man and an Indian. It is true that, from the time of Governor Kinkaid until Governor Swineford, when the scales of justice were held by the hands of Haskett, we could sometimes receive satisfaction, but during the remaining time there never was justice and is none now, it has perished.

More so from the time the Presbyterian Mission with such workers as Mr. J. J. Brady & Co. came to Sitka, our condition became unbearable.

In our mind's eye there rise 28 souls of our friends and relatives that innocently perished from the hand of white men. Of course we always made complains to the U.S. Courts, and in Courts every where received from the Authorities only promises and never satisfaction. Not a single white murderer ending with the last Mills, by name, who killed Donald Austin, a native, ever received retaliation and now enjoys full liberty. With all this we never lost faith in the Government at Washington. This sorrowful reality only made us lose faith in persons sent out here by the Government.

From the Government we always expected and do expect to receive satisfaction to our lawful demands. We believe that the promises of the Vice President who recently visited Sitka were not empty words. And at the present moment bearing the proposition of Government Official Commissioner Geo. R. Tingle to try once more with his help, we believe that our petition will reach the desired end. We leave out the old petitions offered to the Government in former years we offer our petition which is as follow:

1) Not to allow Mr. Brady a right of way through the centre of village along the narrow beach which is situated between the water and our houses, where we keep our boats, canoes, and other things. To forbid him to destroy buildings and other property while building this road. We do not offer pretensions to the land that he now possesses, which was from time immemorial the property of our ancestors, and served us as cemetery. It is enough for him that he unlawfully took possession of this land, and with the bones of some he banked his ground and some he threw into the water. We do not wish to have such work going on, and do not wish other white men to follow Mr. Brady's example.

2) We beg to have Mr. Smith the superintendent of the Baranoff Packing Co. forbidden to take away from us our bays, streams and lagoons where we fished long before white man came. We want him to do such fishing as necessary for him with our consent. We demand that he stop throwing bars and traps across the streams, where by the fish can not enter the lakes for the purpose of spawning. His method of fishing in the last 8 years in Redout, Cross Sound, Hoonah, Whale Bay, Nika Bay, Red fish Bay, compels us to see very plainly that the places mentioned are becoming empty.

Now the Thlingits are compelled to put up their fish in distant places, which with the canoe is reached only with great deal of hard ship.

3) We do not want American saloons. We beg the Government to close them. We understand now that whiskey is poison for us. Tramps and Idle people like soldiers and sailors bring whiskey into our midst from those

saloons. They give it our wives and daughters make them drunk and often seduce them in that state. We have brought such cases to the local authorities here and the result is that the white man goes free and unpunished, but the native suffers fines, imprisonment and punishment. Saloons and other places of amusement of such caliber are not necessary for the welfare of our daughters. We do not want the civilization that only does not stop saloons but encourages them. We do not want the education by which our daughters are torn from their homes and alienated, taught the English language only to give them an easier scope and advantage to practice prostitution. Drunkenness brought adultery with our families, adultery destroyed all ties by which our family relation existed. We do not want to look upon these horrible existing evils with ease and light minds and we wish that the crime committed would be punished not by light fines, but in some way which they could do most good. We do not imagine for one moment that the dance halls and dives of Juneau and Sitka must necessarily be filled with our educated daughters.

We could go on without end to our petitions. We have shown facts and beg the Government to allow us some recognition. The answer to former petitions was never received by the Indians perhaps through the fault of the mediator, in the petition, and we beg the Government to the answer to this to Khlantich, head chief of Sitka tribe.

We have the honor to subscribe ourselves your Most Obedient Servants

John Khlantich
Tom Katzekoni
Sergay Antizhe
Alexander Natzlen
Paul Kattan
Oushkinakk
Nowaya
Saha
Vattaan
Quitka

LETTER FROM BISHOP NICOLAS OF ALASKA TO PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, WILLIAM MCKINLEY, 5 OCTOBER 1898

Mr. President

Called away by the will of the highest ecclesiastical authority in Russia, I am about to leave forever America and my ministry here, and, in wishing all heavenly and earthly blessings to yourself and to the country of which you are at present the representative, I consider it my duty once more to address to you a few words on a subject not unfamiliar to you, owing to former communications from me, in the hope that these words of mine may find their way to your heart and induce you to take action in a cause dear not to me alone, but to all Russia.

Alaska stands in need of radical reform in all directions. This I wrote to you in a former memorial; this I repeat to you now. It is not enough that certain rights were secured to the country in the treaty of 1867, by which it was ceded to America by the Russian Government; those rights should be protected with firmness by the law and the authorities. A limit must be set to the abuses of the various companies, more especially those of the Alaska Commercial Co., which, for over thirty years, has had there the uncontrolled management of affairs and has reduced the country's hunting and fishing resources to absolute exhaustion, and the population to beggary and semi-starvation. A limit must be set to the abuses of officials who, as shown by the experience of many years, are sent there without any discrimination and exclusively on the recommendation of Alaska's immovable guardian, Sheldon Jackson. And lastly—Alaska must be delivered from that man. By his sectarian propaganda he has introduced dissension, enmity and iniquity where those evils did not before exist. It was the Orthodox Church which brought the light of truth to that country, why then try to drive her out of it by every means, lawful or unlawful?

In the name of humanity, of justice and freedom—of those very blessings for the sake of which you declared war against Spain—I make these requests. Will you be acting consistently, if, while waging war for the liberty of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, for their human rights, you ignore all these things at home, in a part of your own country which has been waiting thirty years for the blessings promised to it? And are not we Russians fully entitled to demand of you for Alaska that, in the name of which you have taken up arms against Spain? I have been for seven years the head of the Orthodox Church in America,—and, Mr. President, I speak not from hearsay, but from my own observation and experience,—knowing, besides, the history of past years anything but superficially. Whatever abnormal facts were pointed out to me by Government agents—facts which were generally the product of the abnormal conditions in which our clergy are placed—I uncomplainingly corrected. Now, by the grace of God, there is nothing there, I believe, that could be laid to our charge. The only thing which may possibly be brought up against us, is that we profess the true faith, and have not yet divested ourselves of our sympathies for Russia, the land of our own faith. But is that really sufficient ground for blame and persecution? There is no danger whatever in that to American rule in Alaska, as some persons would perhaps have you believe—if only from the reason that our church never meddles with politics, and our clergy never busied itself, either at home or anywhere else, with intrigues of that sort. We should not be placed on one footing with the Jesuits. Our church allows us only to remonstrate with the highest authority on behalf of the oppressed and innocently suffering,—which I have done repeatedly in this case,—but never allows us to incite citizens to sedition or treason.

And at this moment it is exclusively from a sense of duty, not from any other feeling, that I, as the late Arch-pastor of a country subject to your jurisdiction, Mr. President, address these words to you. I should feel that I had not fulfilled my mission, my duty before God and my flock, were I to leave my post in America without unburdening my heart to you of what oppresses it at this moment.

And so, Mr. President, be indulgent and gracious to poor, hapless Alaska, and show to the Orthodox Church there the respect to which it is entitled, if not by its whole record in that country, yet at least by Art. 2 and 3 of the Declaration of 1867.

Calling down the blessing of God upon you and your country, I beg you will receive the assurance of the respect with which I always have regarded and regard your Excellency's person, and with which I sign myself,

Nicholas, *a Bishop of the Orthodox Church, late of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands*

The LETTER BOX

Juneau ,Alaska.
December 31, 1941

Mr. Sid Charles
Editor Fishing News
Ketchikan, Alaska
Dear Mr. Charles,

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I have written to the Governor of Alaska relative to alleged discrimination against our Native people in Alaska. Also enclosed is a letter I received from Delegate Dimond regarding the proposed Wallgren fish bill.

I will appreciate it very much if you should publish these letters in your paper. I feel it is about time that they call the public attention to what we have to put up with.

I want to again thank you for your attitude toward our people. You have done a great deal in bringing our conditions before the public.

Thanking you in advance for this favor, I am,

Sincerely yours,
ROY PERATROVICH,
Grand Pres., A.N.B.

Hon. Ernest Gruening
Governor of Alask
Juneau, Alaska
Dear Mr. Gruening,

My attention hus been called to a business establishment in Douglas, namely, "Douglas Inn," which has a sign on the door which reads, "No Natives Allowed."

In view of the present emerg ency, when unity is bging stress ed, don't you think that it i very un-American? We have al ways contended that we are en titled to every benefit that i accorded our so-called White Brothers. We pay the require taxes, taxes in some instance that we feel are unjust, such a the school tax. Our Native people pay the school tax each year to educate the white children, yet they try to exclude our children from these schools.

In the present emergency our Native boys are being called upon to defend our beloved country, just as the White boys. There is no distinction being made there, but yet when we try to patronize some business establishments we are told in most cases that Natives are not allowed.

The proprietor of "Douglas Inn" does not seem to realize that our Native boys are just as willing as the White boys to lay down their lives to protect the freedom that he enjoys. Instead he shows his appreciation by having a "No Natives Allowed" sign on his door.

We were shocked when the Jews were discriminated against in Germany. Stories were told of public places having signs, "No Jews Allowed." All freedom loving people in our country were horrified at these reports yet it is being practiced in our country.

We as Indians consider this an outrage because we are the real Natives of Alaska by reason of our ancestors who have guarded these shores and woods for years past. We will still be here to guard our beloved country while hordes of uninterested whites will be fleeing south.

When a Norwegian, Swede or an Irishman makes a fool of himself in any of these business establishments he is asked to leave and it is not held agair all of the Norwegians, Swed or what have you. We ask th we be accorded the same co siderations. If our people mi behave, send the parties co cerned out but let those th conduct themselves respectful be free to come and go.

We know that you have th interest of the Native people heart and we are asking th you use your influence to elim inate this discrimination, not onl in Juneau or Douglas, but i the whole Territory.

Very truly yours,
ROY PERATROVICI
Grand Pres., A. N. I
Mrs. ELIZABETH PEF
ATROVICH, Grar
Pres., A. N.

LOUIS P. PAUL, Juneau, Alaska
WILLIAM L. PAUL, Grand Secretary.
ROBERT B. PERKINS, Grand Treasurer, Klukwan, Alaska.
FRANK BOOTH, Vice-President.
A. J. WANAMAKER, Vice-President, Anjson.

Roy Peratrovich
Albert Brown
Don Millan

ALASKA NATIVE BROTHERHOOD

ESTABLISHED 1913

EXECUTIVE COM
Frank D. Price
Peter Simpson
Ralph Young
Andrew P. Hope
S. G. Davis
Frank Booth
Louis P. Paul
Wm. L. Paul
Cyril J. Zuboff
F. G. Johnson

Juneau, Alaska.
December 20, 1941

Hon. Ernest Gruening
Governor of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Mr. Gruening,

My attention has been called to a business establishment in Douglas, namely, "Douglas Inn," which has a sign on the door which reads, "No Natives Allowed."

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In the present emergency our Native boys are being called upon to defend our beloved country, just as the White boys. There is no distinction being made there but yet when we try to patronize some business establishments we are told in most cases that Natives are not allowed.

The proprietor of "Douglas Inn" do not seem to realize that our Native boys are just as willing as the White boys to lay down their lives to protect the freedom that he enjoys. Instead he shows his appreciation by having a "No Natives Allowed" on his door.

We were shocked when the Jews were discriminated against in Germany. Stories were told of public places having signs, "No Jews Allowed." All Freedom loving people in our country were horrified at these reports yet it is being practised in our country.

We as Indians consider this an outrage because we are the real Natives of Alaska by reason of our ancestors who have guarded these shores and woods for years past. We will still be here to guard our beloved country while hordes of uninterested whites will be fleeing South.

When a Norwegin, Swede or an Irishman makes a fool of himself in any of these business establishments he is asked to leave and it is not held against all of the Norwegins, Swedes or what have you. We ask that we be accorded the same considerations. If our people misbehave, send the parties concerned out but let those that conduct themselves respectfully be free to come and go.

We know that you have the interest of the Native people at heart and we are asking that you use your influence to eliminate this discrimination, not only in Juneau or Douglas, but in the whole Territory.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. Elizabeth Peratrovich
Grand Vice Pres., A.N.S.

Roy Peratrovich
Grand Pres., A.N.B.

Downtown Juneau *Photo courtesy Alaska State Museum*

TERRITORY OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR
JUNEAU, ALASKA

CHAPTER 21

AN ACT

[S. B. 7]

To amend Section 20-1-4, Alaska Compiled Laws Annotated 1949, prescribing penalties for discrimination in providing full and equal accommodations, facilities and privileges to all citizens in places of accommodation within the jurisdiction of the Territory of Alaska.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Territory of Alaska:

Section 1. That Section 20-1-4, Alaska Compiled Laws Annotated 1949, is hereby amended to read as follows:

Section 20-1-4. Violation as misdemeanor: Punishment. Any person who shall violate or aid or incite a violation of said full and equal enjoyment; or any person who shall display any printed or written sign indicating a discrimination on racial grounds of said full and equal enjoyment, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment in jail for not more than thirty (30) days or fined not more than two hundred fifty ($250.00) dollars, or both.

Approved March 2, 1949.

By LORI EVANS
THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

Dorothy McKinley has a dream that one day Elizabeth Peratrovich's name will be as well-known to Alaskans as, say, Martin Luther King Jr.'s.

That's why McKinley, the 29-year-old president of the Alaska Native Sisterhood Douglas Camp No. 3, last year initiated a drive to have a day set aside to honor Peratrovich, a Native civil rights activist who died in 1958.

She was successful. The House and Senate passed and Gov. Steve Cowper signed a bill establishing Feb. 16 as "Elizabeth Peratrovich Day" to honor the past grand president of the Alaska Native Sisterhood "for her courageous, unceasing efforts to eliminate discrimination and bring about equal rights in Alaska."

The first celebration marking Peratrovich's special day will get under way at 7 p.m. Thursday at Centennial Hall. It comes exactly 44 years after territorial Gov. Ernest Gruening signed an anti-discrimination bill into law; Peratrovich had pushed for passage of the bill.

Not only will Thursday's event be a historical remembrance and tribute to Peratrovich's accomplishments, but it also will be "a good chance for the community to learn about the heritage it has in its Alaska Native people. It will be a good time to share and a fun time," says McKinley.

Everyone is invited.

Among those scheduled to speak are McKinley, George Miyasato, president of Alaska Native Brotherhood Douglas Camp No. 3; Richard Stitt, ANB Grand Camp president; Sen. Jim Duncan, D-Juneau; Rep. Fran Ulmer, D-Juneau; Rep. Peter Goll, D-Haines; Juneau Mayor Bruce Botelho; and Carol Jorgensen, deputy director of subsistence for the Department of Fish and Game, who received the first Elizabeth Peratrovich award for her achievements in developing and providing a cross-cultural communications training program and using her skills in positions with the state and the ANS. Several special songs will be presented and a Native dance group will perform. Representatives from Sealaska and the Tlingit and Haida Central Council are also on the program, which will end with a traditional grand march. Gov. Steve Cowper also is hoping to attend.

McKinley started the effort to honor a Native civil rights leader last year after reading some "letters to the editor" in Anchorage newspapers crediting Martin Luther King Jr. with helping to gain equal rights for Alaska Natives.

She knew what she was reading and what had actually happened were two different stories. She knew that Alaska Natives themselves had battled against discrimination and for equal protection under the law as early as 1912 with the formation of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, whose initial objective was obtaining citizenship for Alaska Natives. McKinley wanted to give credit where credit was due.

"We all hear about Martin Luther King – and he was a very wonderful man – but there are things that we've done, too, that we can be proud of," says McKinley, a management accounting officer for the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corp.

While many people were involved in the fight for civil rights in Alaska, McKinley said she singled out Peratrovich because of her speech before territorial senators in 1945 when the anti-discrimination bill was being debated. McKinley and others believe Peratrovich's testimony was "a turning point" in getting the legislation approved.

It was Peratrovich, who was 33 at the time, who "finally won the hearts of a few senators to get this bill passed," says McKinley.

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Evidence of discrimination was quite visible throughout the Territory of Alaska in the 1940s. Some Juneau and Douglas business posted signs that read "No Native Trade Solicited" or "No Dogs, No Natives" or "No Indians Allowed." In some theaters in the territory, Natives were not allowed to sit in the same sections as whites. Military orders were issued prohibiting soldiers from associating with Natives, even though there were many Natives in the armed services. Native children did not go to school with whites. Neighborhoods were generally segregated.

"My mother had very strong feelings about right and wrong," remembers Roy Peratrovich Jr., the oldest child of Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich Sr. "She was appalled by just seeing these signs and wondering why they were there."

He believes it was his parents' love for their children – their "desire to protect us and help us so much" – that initially triggered their involvement in working for equal rights for Alaska's Natives.

The couple's three children, however, were too young in the 1940s to remember much of what their parents were doing or to recognize its significance.

Their only daughter, Loretta Montgomery of Moses Lake, Wash., recalls accompanying her mother to legislative hearings as a small child. Her mother would knit as she listened to the proceedings; Loretta would run between the seats. She was 5 when the anti-discrimination bill became law.

The couple's younger son, Frank, who works as the area travel operations officer for the Juneau office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, remembers his parents spending many hours around the kitchen table as they worked to get anti-discrimination legislation passed. He was 9 when the bill was approved.

The couple shielded their children from much of their work – and the discrimination they were fighting, says Roy Jr., who was 11 when the bill was approved. The Peratrovichs were one of the first Native families in Juneau to live in a non-Native neighborhood and Roy Jr. was one of the first Native children to attend public schools here, he says.

"As a young boy I didn't know that much about what was going on. I was more interested in playing cowboys and Indians and I wanted to be a cowboy. I was no different than any other child," he says.

He remembers however, that his parents were careful "not to alienate us against anyone." As a result, the Peratrovich children's friends could have been the children of their parents' "political enemies," says Roy Jr., a partner in the engineering firm of Peratrovich, Nottingham and Drage, which has offices in Anchorage, Juneau and Seattle.

The couple's children remember growing up in a happy, comfortable, busy home.

"Mom and Dad were always good providers. They didn't have a lot of money, but we always had something to eat and an open door for friends," remembers Roy Jr.

Visitors were common, including whole basketball teams that had traveled to Juneau.

Frank remembers his mother as a "gracious" woman who expected her children "to try a little harder than anyone else. ... It was hard to pull something off on her."

She was a woman with a "wide range of interests. Her main concern, of course, was helping Alaska Natives," says Frank.

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Elizabeth Wanamaker Peratrovich was born in Southeast Alaska on July 4, 1911. She was adopted and raised by Andrew and Mary Wanamaker, who were Presbyterian Church missionaries. She was closely related to the Emma Marks family in Juneau.

She attended schools throughout Southeast and furthered her studies at Western College of Education in Bellingham, Wash. She married Roy Peratrovich on Dec. 15, 1931. The couple lived for a time in Klawock before moving to Juneau.

Mrs. Peratrovich died Dec. 1, 1958, after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Her husband, who had been looking forward to Thursday's celebration, died just last week.

Her children say their mother would be honored that a day has been established recognizing her work for equal rights in Alaska.

She also would be quite surprised.

"She wasn't into personal stuff very much," says son Frank.

"My mom would probably say Roy should be here with me (being honored)," says daughter Loretta. "And you know what my dad would say? It was all your mother. ... They were strictly a team. ... Dad was right alongside her. It was never just mother. They complemented each other. What one thought, the other usually just felt the same way. They backed each other up and said, 'Let's do it.'"

All of the children are quick to point out that their parents were not alone in their battle for equal rights for Alaska Natives. During the 1940s, their mother was grand president of the Alaska Native Sisterhood and their father was grand president of the Alaska Native Brotherhood.

"They represented the ANB and the ANS. There were a number of people that Mom and Dad contacted that should be given credit, too," says Loretta.

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Perhaps one of the best accounts of Peratrovich's appearance before the Senate on Feb. 8, 1945, was written by territorial governor Ernest Gruening in his autobiography "Many Battles." Gruening, who was a staunch supporter of the bill, described it this way:

"...The anti-discrimination bill was introduced by Edward Anderson, the former mayor of Nome. ... It passed the House with little debate by a vote of nineteen to five, but when it came up in the Senate, it was violently opposed by (one senator). 'Far from being brought closer together, which will result from this bill,' he said, "the races should be kept further apart. Who are these people, barely out of savagery, who want to associate with us whites with five thousand years of recorded civilization behind us?' (Another senator) also opposed the bill, saying that he did not want to sit next to Eskimos in a theater; they smelled.

"According to established legislative custom during the debate on the bill, an opportunity was offered to anyone present to voice his views. A young woman, Mrs. Roy Peratrovich, rose in the gallery and said she would like to be heard. She came to the floor, crossed it and sat next to the president on his raised platform. The packed gallery was tense with expectation; clearly passage of this bill would spell profound social change in Alaska.

"'I would not have expected,' Elizabeth Peratrovich said in quiet, steady voice, 'that I, who am barely out of savagery, would have to remind gentlemen with five thousand years of recorded civilization behind them of our Bill of Rights. When my husband and I came to Juneau and sought a home in a nice neighborhood where our children could play happily with our neighbors' children, we found such a house and had arranged to lease it. When the owners learned that we were Indians, they said 'no.' Would we be compelled to live in the slums?' Mrs. Peratrovich went on to give other instances of discrimination she had encountered. She was a beautiful woman; her intelligence was obvious, her composure faultless, and her plea could not have been more effective. When she finished, there was a wild burst of applause in the gallery. The Senate passed the bill eleven to five. A new era in Alaska's racial relations had begun."

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For Dorothy McKinley, Elizabeth Peratrovich has become a role model.

"She's just inspired me so much. ... I learned that

Please turn to Peratrovich, Page 18

Peratrovich...

Continued from Page 15

if you believe in what you're doing you really can do anything you put your mind to.

"... I never pictured myself going up to the legislature and saying 'Look, I want to get this law passed.' I've never done it before. I didn't know the processes, but I learned. I stuck to it and I ... found out I could believe in myself and I could believe in others. It gave me a drive that I didn't quite have before."

McKinley sees the bill which passed in 1945 as far more reaching in its implications than merely making discrimination illegal.

"These issues were ... very important to the survival of the Native people. Had they not fought these things where would we be today? I ask myself that. Would I be here? Would I have had the chance that I have now to go and get an education and get a good job and go out and help other people?"

The bill Peratrovich worked so hard for paved the way for a variety of things that have become a way of life in Alaska, including the Native corporations, the Tlingit and Haida Central Council, improved health care and improved education for Natives, says McKinley.

While much has changed for the good as a result of the 1945 bill, the work is far from over, she says. The passage of the anti-discrimination bill "was the beginning. We have to keep going. We have to keep ensuring that there is equality."

She's hoping Peratrovich's life will inspire others to continue the work started by others so many years ago.

She would also like Alaskans – all Alaskans – "to know that they have something to be proud of. Alaska has a rich history in its Native people. ... Native children are ashamed sometimes. They don't understand. They're made fun of because other people don't understand. I think if they could just see the value in it (Peratrovich's work and others like her) they wouldn't be ashamed anymore, that there is something there for everyone. ... Her efforts were for the benefit of all."

As people prepare to honor the work of his mother, Roy Jr. hopes the celebration will also be a source of encouragement and inspiration to others.

He offers this sentiment: "I don't think the celebration would be worth the effort if it didn't set a standard for some of our people and others. If you believe strongly enough in something, and work at it, you can get it accomplished."

Juneau Empire 2/15/89

The signing of a bill designating February 16 as Elizabeth Peratrovich day. From left to right: Roy Peratrovich, Jr., Frank Peratrovich, Sr., Nettie (Frank's wife), Betsy (Roy's daughter), Governor Steve Cowper, Roy Peratrovich, Sr., John Gilbert and Frank, Jr. (Frank's sons). *Photo courtesy Governor's Office.*

Offered: 4/12/88 5-2126B
Referred: Rules

Original sponsor: Rules Committee

IN THE SENATE BY THE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 499 (State Affairs)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

FIFTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

A BILL

For an Act entitled: "An Act establishing February 16 as 'Elizabeth Peratrovich Day'."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

* Section 1. FINDINGS. The Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood had fought for three years to eliminate the racial discrimination that was evident in Alaska during the first part of the 20th century. Alaska Natives were barred from some public facilities and segregated from non-Natives in other public facilities. Elizabeth Peratrovich, then Grand President of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, worked tirelessly in support of House Bill No. 14, the first legislation in the territory to prohibit racial discrimination in public accommodations. Her testimony in support of H.B. 14 before the territorial Senate overcame the unfavorable predisposition that existed in the legislature. The bill passed the territorial Senate on February 8, 1945, and was signed into law by the governor of the territory, Ernest Gruening, on February 16, 1945.

* Sec. 2. AS 44.12 is amended by adding a new section to read:

Sec. 44.12.065. ELIZABETH PERATROVICH DAY. Elizabeth Peratrovich Day is established on February 16 of each year to honor Elizabeth Peratrovich, past Grand President of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, for her courageous, unceasing efforts to eliminate discrimination and bring about equal rights in Alaska. Elizabeth Peratrovich Day may be observed by suitable observances and exercises by civic groups and the public.

Anfesia Shapsnikoff

Unangan Aleut Tradition Bearer

Anfesia Shapsnikoff of Unalaska spoke the three main dialects of her Native Unangan (Aleut) language, and could read and write not only in her own tongue, but English and Russian as well. She knew the basketry styles and techniques of the Aleut people, whom she served as nurse, church reader, teacher and community leader nearly all her life.

Background

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Aleut people became prominent citizens in the cities, villages and trading posts throughout Alaska. Fluent in Russian as well as their Native tongue, and often able to read and write both, they rose to leadership positions within the Russian American Company and the Orthodox Church.

In 1824, Father Ioan (John) Veniaminov [his last name is the Russian form of Benjamin] arrived at Unalaska, in the Eastern Aleutians., with his wife Katherine and their infant daughter. Father John spent the next ten years of his life studying the Unangan (Aleut) language and culture, and almost everything else about the region. With the help of an Aleut chief, Ivan Pan'kov, he devised an alphabet for Unangan and translated the first books into that language. Later these men opened a school where Aleut children and adults were taught to read and write in Unangan and Russian.

The first Aleut Orthodox priest, Father Iakov (James) Netsvetov, using the same writing system, started a school at Atka. Graduates of these village schools became in later years, teachers, missionaries, priests, accountants, seamen, musicians, artists, explorers, cartographers, shipbuilders, storekeepers—the mainstay of the Russian American colony.

Father Veniaminov also built a church at Unalaska, and taught local Aleuts carpentry skills necessary for its construction. One talented Unangan artist, Ivan Kruikov, painted a series of icons for the temple, a remarkable synthesis of indigenous Aleut creativity and Orthodox Christianity. Years later, this church was replaced with a much larger cathedral, with valuable icons, chalices, and candelabra contributed from Russia.

Atka and Unalaska were the two main centers for this flowering of Aleut culture. In the years following the sale of Alaska to the United States,

Aleuts continued to read and write in Russian and Unangan. They wrote their own stories in their own language, and printed a tri-lingual magazine,

Orthodox Alaska, at Unalaska in the early twentieth century. They continued to teach younger generations their traditional art and crafts, and in some communities, the traditional Aleut ways survived well into the twentieth century. Traditional kayaks were still made, traditional barabaras were still built, traditional songs were still sung.

For nearly 100 years, (1884-1974), it was, however, the policy of the U.S. Government, to discourage and even prohibit the use of Native Alaskan languages, and to encourage Native Alaskans to abandon their traditional ways of life and adopt Euro-American patterns. Aleuts were willing, and even eager to learn English, but they resolutely refused to give up using their other, traditional languages. Since many were descended from both Russian and

Native Alaskan ancestors, they were determined to preserve all of their heritage. Aleut women a hundred years ago were actively engaged in this struggle. Matrona Salamatov, for example, served as a tri-lingual public school teacher at Belkovsky in the late 1880's, and wove fantastic traditional Aleut style mats, now at the Lowie Museum in Berkeley, California. Anfesia Shapsnikoff did similar work in this century.

Anfesia, Shapsnikoff

Anfesia Shapsnikoff personified all that was remarkable and precious in this Aleut cultural legacy. With a father of Russian and Unangan background and a mother from Attu, in the Western Aleutian, Anfesia was born at Atka, in the central Aleutians, and raised at Unalaska, where she arrived at age five in 1905. Anfesia was fluent in the three main dialects of Aleut. For the next decade she attended the Aleut-Russian School and learned to read and write Unganan and Slavonic, but she also went to classes at the Jesse Lee Home to learn English and housekeeping skills. Besides the lessons at these schools, Anfesia was forced, practically against her will, to learn to weave traditional Attu baskets, under the strict guidance of her Aunt Mary, and eventually became an accomplished basket weaver herself.

In 1918-19, an international outbreak of influenza devastated the Native population of Alaska. In Bristol Bay and the Aleutian region, hundreds of people, including Anfesia's mother, died. Anfesia was old enough to marry, however, by this time, and she wed Michael Tutiakoff in July 1919. He was ordained a deacon in the Orthodox Church soon after, and Anfesia, a tiny lady not quite five fee tall, remained at home with their children while Deacon Michael was often travelling to various villages on church business.

In January, 1933, her husband was lost at sea between Umnak and Unalaska. Later, Anfesia, a widow with four children, married Sergei Shapsnikoff, himself a widower with several more. Anfesia, in fact, adopted or raised several more children besides her own, and became a licensed foster parent years later, at the age of 72.

Rarely a woman's role, Anfesia received the

Anfesia Shapsnikoff *Photo by Roger Page*

permission of Bishop Alexei during the same decade to serve as Church Reader, leading the responses and chanting the Scripture readings in Aleut and Slavonic at most services. When the Second World War began, and Japanese forces occupied Attu and Kiska in the West, the federal government decided to evacuate the Native residents from the Aleutians. Anfesia was concerned that the abandoned church would be looted or bombed, and supervised the burial of most of the cathedral's treasures before she had to leave for years of exile in Southeast Alaska. Her foresight was certainly responsible for saving this irreplaceable artistic legacy for future generations of Alaskans. Unalaska itself was attacked during this time, and Anfesia served as nurse for patients who had been evacuated from the village's small hospital.

Unangan people from throughout the Chain were removed to internment camps near Juneau, Wrangell and Ketchikan, where they stayed for several years. Because these sites had not been prepared for use, there was no plumbing, running water, and in many places no heat. Conditions were so terrible that one fourth of the Aleut population died during this time. When they returned to their homes after the war, they found their homes and often churches ransacked, their family heirlooms and religious treasures stolen by the soldiers sent to defend the islands.

Unalaska, located near the Dutch Harbor airfield, remained under military control for many more years. The Aleuts were confined to a small, enclosed area in and around their village. Family life was disrupted by the decade of upheaval caused by the war and its aftermath, and the government attitude was that it was best to remove Native children from their homes. Anfesia vigorously protested this policy, and eventually succeeded in having the Territorial and Federal programs investigated by a prominent social scientist. Simultaneously, Anfesia worked to establish a local organization to care for neglected or abused children, and she committed herself to this board's work, even when she herself was years beyond retirement age.

Interest in traditional Aleut crafts, especially the extraordinary basketry for which the region is world famous, and in Unangan language and folklore, brought scholars from all over the country to Anfesia's home, and inspired museums and historical societies to invite her to their meetings and celebrations. Anfesia met dignitaries at the state and federal level, including John Kennedy. For twenty years she supplied linguists and anthropologists with information on all aspects of Unangan culture, travelling to states "outside" to demonstrate basket weaving and lecture on Aleut history and tradition. She continued to be active at home, however, serving on the City Council, Board of Health, and the Unalaska Historical Society board. Fluent in three languages, and able to read them in two alphabets, Anfesia herself represented so much of what is unique in Aleut culture.

Anfesia celebrated her last Christmas on the old Julian Calendar, still used by the Orthodox Church in Russia and in most Alaskan Orthodox communities, January 6-7, 1973. Since the village priest was out of town, she conducted the vigil, her son reading in Slavonic, her grandson in English, while she chanted in Aleut. A few days later she performed the baptism of her great-grandson, but became seriously ill January 13. The local clinic decided she should be evacuated by plane to an Anchorage hospital, a thousand miles away. Anfesia died a short distance out of Cold Bay. She was buried in a place of honor near the front of the Unalaska Cathedral she loved and served so well.

In February 1973, the Alaska State Legislature passed the following resolution honoring her:

Introduced: 2/6/73
Referred: Rules

IN THE SENATE BY POLAND

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 24

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

EIGHTH LEGISLATURE – FIRST SESSION

Honoring Anfesia Shapsnikoff.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS Anfesia Shapsnikoff, known affectionately to many Alaskans as "Little Grandma", recently passed away; and

WHEREAS Mrs. Shapsnikoff was a lifelong resident of Unalaska and devoted her life to preserving the colorful heritage of the Aleut people; and

WHEREAS she, probably more than any other person, was a spokesman for the Aleut people and was instrumental in reviving the art of Aleut basketry and in preserving other segments of the culture and history of her people; and

WHEREAS, aside from the above activities for which she rightfully was renowned in her own lifetime, she was a noted community organizer who continually worked within local government for the betterment of her people and has been credited with doing more to perpetuate the Russian Orthodox Church in Unalaska than anyone and received a special certificate from Bishop Theodosius for her long and outstanding service to the Orthodox faith; and

WHEREAS she represented the State of Alaska at many functions over the years and in many states, including being in charge of Alaska's program at the Oregon Centennial in 1959, visiting museums, Indian centers, and like organizations talking about her people and other Alaskan matters, as well as throughout the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS she was honored during the Alaska Centennial in 1967 with the Governor's Award for perpetuating Native arts and crafts;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska Legislature that it expresses its most profound sense of loss as a result of the death of this truly remarkable "Little Grandma" but affirms its belief that, because of her devotion to her people, her culture, her community, and her state, generations of Alaskans for years to come will be indebted to Anfesia Shapsnikoff and she will always be revered as a truly great Alaskan.

COPIES of this Resolution shall be sent to Philemon and Tracy Tutiakoff, her sons; Mrs. Robert Herrick, her daughter; Vincent Tutiakoff, her grandson; and to Timothy Tutiakoff, Gregory Shapsnikoff and Mrs. Tom Reedy, her foster children.

Follow Up Activities

Objective: To familiarize students withthe geography and resources of the Aleutian Archipelago and gain some insight into traditional Aleut culture.

Procedures: Use these questions for discussion in small groups or with the entire class.

1. On a map of the Aleutian Islands, find Unalaska, Umnak, Attu, Atka and the Pribilofs, St. George and St. Paul. Have students measure the distances between islands and the entire length of the archipelago.

2. Find photographs of the terrain of the Aleutian Islands. Discuss what resources were available in pre-contact times for supplying basic human needs, food, clothing and shelter. Consider the use of grass for bedding, containers, coverings and screens.

3. In any book devoted to Native Alaskan art, find photographs of Aleut basketry and discuss the technique —and patience—necessary to make one.

4. Using other texts, research the history of bilingual education in Alaska.

5. Read the book *Century of Servitude*, by Dorothy K. Jones, and discuss the history of the Aleutians, especially during World War II.

6. Most state and local museums have some samples of Aleut grass weaving. Consider a visit, or write to a museum about the possibility of examining samples in person.

7. Ask an Alaska Native adult about their experiences with the use of their native language in the public school when they were growing up.

Notes and Sources

Dr. Lydia Black's Book, *Aleut Art*, contains beautiful illustrations of traditional Aleut weaving, carving and handicrafts, a page of which is reproduced here with her kind permission.

Samples of Aleut basketry from Aleut Art, and samples of Unangan Aleut texts in Cyrillic and Latin alphabets as Anfesia could read them follow.

Dr. Michael Krauss' book, *Alaska Native Languages: Past, Present and Future*, available from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, is an important resource for further study of the history of bilingual education in Alaska.

24. *The Lord's Prayer*[178]

(1) tumanî·n ádaq [timáza·n[179] adámas]! (2) hâ'man akúrtgin înin [kuyú·das] kúŋin,[180] (3) ásá·n amcurá·sá-dá·rta[181] [sŋanâ·datalgá·rta[181]],[182] (4) aŋalî·n hâqá·rta[181] (5) anugtanátgin malgá·rtan[183] înim [kuyú·dam] kúgan[184] káyug[185] tánam kúgan. (6) qalgádam anugtanà· [anuganà·] ŋî·n aqacá· [aráda] wayá·m: (7) káyug tumáni·n [timáza·n] ádun[186] ŋî·n ignída, (8) hâmákun[187] túman [tímas] káyug[188] malgaligî·n ŋî·n adurínan ignidákun.[189] (9) káyug[185] túman [tímas] suglatacrí·-ranartgin, (10) tára adalú·dam[190] ilá·n[191] túman harrica· [tímas sismída].

(11) aŋalì·n, kayù·n káyug alruna·sâ·dausì·n hawá·n husugá·n akunî·n málik.[192] (12) amî·n.

(1) For us / [our] Father. (2) That / art / the skies / on, (3) Thy name / be praised [be hallowed[142a]], (4) Thy daylight / come, (5) what Thou want / be done / the sky / on / and [also] / land / on. (6) Food / that is wanted / to us / give / now; (7) and [also] / for us / debts / to us / release, (8) those / we / also / while being done[143a] / to us / having debts / (we) release. (9) And [also] / us / let not be misled, (10) but / deceit / from / us / save.

(11) Thy daylight, Thy strength / and / Thy utmost respectability / always // because are. (12) Amen.

Агнакахъ, Тхинъ тунумнинъ аданьинъ сакататачгиканъ, тинъ дакинъ Тхинъ агидуситхинъ укухтакугикинъ маликъ. Аманъ киилахтимъ усюганъ сагимаганъ каданъ Тхинъ атхахтханъ, агнамихтанъ аналягисаньинъ-нинъ, аналикъ каюхъ Тхинъ таягуминъ Исраиламъ нанъ алгунасикъ.

Святый Боже:

Агугумъ Аналигадигасада, тунагимъ Аналигадигасада, асагимулюкъ, аналигадигасада, нинъ Тхинъ итугинсада.

Слава и нынѣ:

Амчугакъ адамъ-нанъ каюхъ Льляганъ-нанъ, каюхъ ангиганъ Аналигадигасадаганъ-нанъ, уаямъ ауанъ усюганъ ауанъ тамадага инанагнагулюкъ. Аминь.

Пресвятая Троице:

Канкунъ-амъ Аналигадигасада; нинъ

Тхинъ итугинсада. Гуспудакъ! тунухъ-тагунъ кукинъинъ амалида. Агугукъ! малгакамулюкъ малгананьинъ кукинъинъ игуча. Аналигадигасадакъ; каюгананулюкъ кукинъинъ уагаликъ угача, асамнинъ кулаганъ.

Отче нашъ:

Туманинъ Адакъ; аманъ акухтхинъ, нинъ кунинъ асанъ амчугасадахта, аналинъ акахта, анухтанатхинъ малгахтанъ; нимъ куганъ каюхъ танамъ куганъ; калгадамъ анухтананьинъ акача уалмъ, каюхъ туманинъ адунъ нинъ игнида, амакунъ туманъ каюхъ малгалигинъ-нинъ адугинанъ игнидакунъ каюхъ туманъ суглатачгиганахтхинъ, тага адалудамъ нанъ туманъ агича.

Возгласъ:

Аналинъ каюнъ каюхъ алгунасинъ, Адамъ, нанъ, коюхъ Льляганъ-нанъ каюхъ Ангиганъ аналигадигасадаганъ-нанъ,

Sophia Vlasoff

Kodiak Alutiiq Pioneer Bilingual Teacher

Sophia Vlasoff was the first woman to teach the reading and writing of her own Native Alaskan language near Kodiak, beginning in about 1818. How she came to learn to read and write Alutiiq, the local language of the Kodiak Island area, and to become a school teacher at such an early date is a fascinating story.

Background

Starting schools in Alaska was a difficult project with several early but short-lived attempts. The first report of a school anywhere in Alaska appeared in 1785. Gregory and Natalia Shelikov, leaders of the expedition that established the first non-Native settlement in Alaska, claimed to have begun conducting classes for Alutiiq children while they were living among them. But when the Shelikov's returned to Irkutsk, in Siberia, the school closed.

In 1794, ten monks from Valaam monastery in eastern Finland, were recruited to serve as the first missionaries to Alaska, but their instructions were to find some promising and eager students and send them to Russia for education. Their leader, Father Ioasaph (Joseph) wrote to his superiors, he asked permission to open a school at Kodiak. He did not think it was a very good idea for children to be removed from their villages. Besides being homesick, he pointed out, Native students often become sick and die from diseases for which they had no immunity. He asked for books and materials so that they could start a school in Kodiak.

Mail travelled very slowly in the early days of Alaskan history. A year or more might pass before an answer might come all the way from Europe. There was just no easy way to communicate with the authorities, and no quick way to receive answers to important questions. The first Kodiak school finally opened ten years later!

While the government had issued strict orders about how the Native People should be humanely treated, there were no police or law enforcement personnel in Alaska. Shelikov's manager, Alexander Baranov and his men could do almost anything they wanted. Most of Father Ioasaph's first letter, dated May 25, 1795, was filled with complaints about the way Baranov was running the colony.

Because of these reports, the government appointed another church official, Father Gideon, to investigate the situation in Alaska. He also had permission to organize a school, and brought with him the necessary materials. Once he arrived in Kodiak, Father Gideon studied Alutiiq and began teaching students to read and write their Native language, as well as Russian.

Many of the students in Father Gideon's school were called Creole. These were the children of mixed, Russian and Native Alaskan marriages. Of course, Natives people spoke their local language, but since the company foremen and officials spoke Russian, this language was also important. The men who sailed from Siberia to work in Alaska came as bachelors. Because they had signed contracts to serve the Russian-America Company for seven years, many of them married local, Native Alaskan women while they were here. When their term of service ended, many of them stayed in Alaska. Creoles often spoke both Russian

and their Native language fluently. Father Gideon invented an Alutiiq alphabet and taught his pupils to read and write both Russian and Aleut. It is believed that Sophie Vlasoff was one of the over one hundred students who attended Father Gideon's school between 1805 and 1807.

Like the Shelikovs, however, Father Gideon did not stay in Alaska. He had to report on the situation in Kodiak to the government back in St. Petersburg, so, after only two years, Father Gideon returned to Europe and his school closed.

Sophia Vlasoff

Sophia must have thought that learning to read and write was useful and important. When one of the other monks, Father Herman, moved away from the town of Kodiak and established a school on nearby Spruce Island, Sophia went to him and volunteered to help. Father Herman had decided to move to this location to avoid the harassment of Baranov and his men, where he continued to protest the harsh treatment of the Alutiiq people. In 1818, when Baranov was finally replaced, Father Herman wrote to the new manager, asking him to establish a more just and humane administration. "Help us to know what mercy is," he pleaded.

Father Herman was not eager to have more staff at his little school. He tried to persuade Sophia to give up her idea of being a teacher. There were no comforts at the new site, no stores, no supplies, no neighbors. In spite of these conditions, Sophia wanted to stay with Father Herman, learn from him and assist him. Eventually he relented and allowed her and with her new husband, Vlasoff, to join him. The couple built a little cabin at the Spruce Island settlement.

The years of exploitation under Alexander Baranov had left many families destitute, many children without anyone to care for them. Sophia was appointed teacher for the Creole and Native girls, many of them orphans, teaching them what she had learned at Father Gideon's school, and various useful domestic skills, cooking, sewing, weaving and embroidery. She and her husband also helped with the religious education, especially in teaching prayers and hymns in Alutiiq.

The Alutiiq people loved Father Herman for his courageous defense of their rights, for his dedicated efforts to educate the children, and for the example of humility, honesty and genuine holiness he represented. Sophia stayed with Father Herman as his disciple as long as he lived, and even after his death in December, 1837, she remained at Spruce Island. Many of the stories that Alutiiq people continued to tell about Father Herman came from her. If Sophia and another Alutiiq assistant, Constantine Larionoff, had not told their friends and relatives around Kodiak about the example, teachings and activities of Father Herman, he would probably been forgotten. Thanks to their efforts, millions of people around the world are familiar with his life, and the Aleut people consider him one of the most important personalities in their history.

Sophia also had some very capable students in her classroom. Some graduates of the Spruce Island school went off to other parts of Alaska. Simeon Lukin and his sons operated a trading post on the Kuskokwim River for many years. Alexander Kashevarov continued his training at the Russian Naval Academy at Kronstadt, in the Baltic Sea, and sailed around the world several times. He helped explore and map the Arctic coast of Alaska from Point Hope to Point Barrow, and served as governor of the Siberian port of Ayan. Kashevarov retired from service to the Russian American Company as a Major General, and died in St. Petersburg just before Alaska was sold to the United States. We can tell from this that Sophia must have been a very exceptional teacher, a remarkable Alaskan Native woman.

Follow Up Activities

Objective: To acquaint students with geography and historic sites in early Alaskan history.

Procedures: Divide the class into five small groups to complete the first five activities. The sixth and seventh will require work outside the classroom.

1. Find these important locations on a map of the North Pacific:
   Irkutsk: the headquarters of the Russian America Company
   Kodiak Island and the city of Kodiak
   Spruce Island

2. Mail and supply routes from Europe to Alaska had to extend from St. Petersburg (Leningrad) to Copenhagen, Denmark, the Canary Islands, Rio de Janiero, Brazil, Santiago, Chile, and San Francisco, California or, crossing the Pacific, from Sitka to Honolulu, Hawaii, Sydney, Australia, Capetown, South Africa, and again, the Canary Islands and Copenhagen. Have students trace these itineraries.

3. The monks from Valaam travelled overland from St. Petersburg to Moscow, then to Kazan, Tobolsk, Omsk, Irkutsk, Yakutsk and Okhotsk. Ask students to trace this route across Siberia.

4. Sophia was an Alutiiq. Using the Language Map of Alaska, produced by the Alaska Native Language Center, UAF, (1982), locate this language, and the other five in this series: Aleut (Unangan); Gwich'in (Kutchin), Yup'ik, and Tlingit.

5. The northern coast of Alaska was explored by one of Sophia's students, Alexander Kashevarov. His expedition travelled by ship and kayak along the Arctic coastline from Point Hope to an area thirty miles east of Point Barrow. Have students plot the course of the Kashevarov expedition from Kodiak to Unalaska, then to St. Michael's, and north to Point Hope and Barrow.

6. Interview or invite a bilingual teacher to speak to the class about their interests, training and experience.

7. Research the dates and names of bilingual teachers who have taught at your school.

Notes and Sources

Since Mrs. Vlasoff lived before cameras were invented, we have no portrait of her. Information about the history of bilingual education in Alaska can be found in Dr. Michael Krauss's book, *Alaska Native Languages*. The language map of Alaska is also available from the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

A sketch of Kodiak as it appeared about 1840 follows.

Kodiak circa 1840

Language Map of Alaska